

The Fastest Game

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SUPER: INSPIRED BY TRUE EVENTS

INT. MIAMI JAI ALAI - FRONTON - NIGHT

SLOW MOTION -- Two JAI ALAI PLAYERS, foot-long cestas (baskets) strapped to their forearms, brace for a potential game-winning point.

Sweat beads on their noses. They breathe heavily.

A LARGE CROWD stands with anticipation.

The gravity of the moment hangs in the air.

RONNIE (V.O.)

Guinness World Records dubbed jai alai the fastest ball sport in the world.

PLAYER 1 serves the pelota (ball) -- CLOSE UP SLOW MOTION -- of the pelota rolling through his cesta and snapping off the tip. Tight on the ball as it hurls through the air, hitting the wall and FREEZES, flat as a pancake.

RONNIE (V.O.) (cont'd)

A goatskin covered ball so lethal, it's left some of the sport's best players wishing they'd never stepped foot inside a fronton.

THWACK -- back to REGULAR SPEED -- the pelota flies off the wall back at PLAYER 2, who jerks his head as the ball speeds by, narrowly missing his face.

INT. MIAMI JAI ALAI - VIP BOX - CONTINUOUS

RONNIE WEISS, 26, handsome, intense, in a perfectly tailored tuxedo, closely watches the heated match.

SUPER: MIAMI, CHRISTMAS 1975

RONNIE (V.O.)

Certain types of people gravitate to the game despite the danger, and some, because of it.

Player 1 wins the point pumping his fist. Ronnie cracks a big smile, marking a "W" next to the winning combination on his list.

RONNIE (V.O.) (cont'd)

Present company included. But I
didn't play, fuck that, I bet it.
And I bet big.

RITA VARGAS, 24, Ronnie's Cuban girlfriend, tanned with
shinny black hair and green eyes, in a green sequined
halter dress, leaps into his arms and kisses him.

RITA

Feliz Navidad, amor.

RONNIE (V.O.)

My father said jai alai was the
most beautiful thing he'd ever
seen.

STOCK FOOTAGE: SLOW MOTION -- A PLAYER jumps and flings
the pelota against the granite wall.

RONNIE (V.O.) (cont'd)

Pure. Elegant. Graceful.

BLACK AND WHITE STOCK FOOTAGE: Jai alai played in Basque
Country, Spain.

RONNIE (V.O.) (cont'd)

Told me stories of farmers in the
Basque Country of Spain playing
in church courtyards under the
Pyrenees mountains. As if he'd
been there himself, seen it with
his own eyes.

INT. DINGY POKER ROOM - MIAMI BEACH - FLASHBACK - DAY

HARRY WEISS, 40, 5 o'clock shadow, tan linen suit, sits
with other DEGENERATES, nervously organizing his cards.

RONNIE (V.O.)

But he never left Miami. Couldn't
afford to.

Harry loses the hand and the pot goes to his OPPONENT.

INT. MIAMI JAI ALAI - FLASHBACK - DAY

A YOUNG RONNIE, 10, and Harry watch a match in progress.

PLAYERS battle back and forth, fast and furious.

RONNIE (V.O.)
Took me to the fronton every
weekend as a kid.

Eating a hot dog Ronnie smiles as Harry motions around
the fronton, passionately describing the scene.

RONNIE (V.O.) (cont'd)
Taught me the rules.

Players line the bench waiting to play.

HARRY
The pelota has to hit between
lines 4 and 7 on the serve.

PLAYER 1 serves.

HARRY (cont'd)
Single elimination round robin.

PLAYER 2 tries to field the ball, misses...

Ronnie smiles at his dad, with admiration.

HARRY (cont'd)
So one player gets eliminated
every point...

...and moves to his spot at the end of the bench.

HARRY (cont'd)
...the next in line gets up and
plays the winner.

NEXT PLAYER goes up to face Player 1.

HARRY (cont'd)
First to score 7 points wins.

EXT. MIAMI JAI ALAI - LATER

Ronnie and his father exit the fronton hand in hand.

RONNIE (V.O.)
After he died, I thought I'd
never step foot inside a fronton
again.

INT. MIAMI JAI ALAI - AUDITORIUM - 1975 - NIGHT

The packed auditorium watches a match.

RONNIE (V.O.)

But by 1975, Miami Jai Alai was the largest fronton in the world. The hottest ticket in town filled with movie stars, Presidents...

BLACK AND WHITE NEWS FOOTAGE: PAUL NEWMAN, JOHN TRAVOLTA, and RICHARD NIXON at Miami Jai Alai.

RONNIE (V.O.) (cont'd)

...and huge crowds. Over 15,000 a night and a million dollars in the handle. Where *all* the money was.

INT. MIAMI JAI ALAI - COUNTING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Fronton EMPLOYEES dump buckets of cash on a table, sort, stack and count the endless bills.

RONNIE (V.O.)

And that's what I wanted, *all* the money.

INT. MIAMI JAI ALAI - CONTINUOUS

Ronnie and Rita walk toward the ticket window.

RITA

You speak to Looney yet?

RONNIE

'Bout to.

RITA

He hasn't been reliable in weeks. The team's starting to notice.

RONNIE

I'll handle it.

Rita side-eyes Ronnie and smirks.

RITA

Don't be a pussy.

Rita peels off towards the ticket windows.

RONNIE

I'm not being a pussy.

Ronnie exchanges nods with JOHN DEWEES, 35, pale and wiry, sitting behind a window in a Miami Jai Alai employee vest.

John puts three stacks of win tickets into a paper bag, and slides it down the long counter to his wife KATHY, 28, blonde, tall and thin with amazing breasts.

Kathy passes the bag through her window to Rita, who grabs it and winks.

EXT. MIAMI JAI ALAI - COUNTINUOUS

Ronnie exits, walks up to the valet stand where DAVID "LOONEY" HARMEN, 28, gaunt with chiseled features, in a tuxedo, chain-smoking to the filter, waits anxiously in his Thunderbird, suicide doors ajar.

Ronnie jumps in and smiles. Looney doesn't reciprocate.

RONNIE (V.O.)

Looney and I met playing baseball
for the P.A.L. at Flamingo park
on Miami Beach.

EXT. FLAMINGO PARK - MIAMI BEACH - FLASHBACK - DAY

Close on a Police Athletic League Logo on a COACH'S jersey.

UMPIRE

One out, man on 3rd, batter up.

Looney, 14, pours Coke on a pile of red fire ants.

RONNIE (V.O.)

Everybody called him Looney
'cause he was fucking crazy.

Coach turns to the dugout.

COACH

Looney, you're up!

Looney puts on a helmet, grabs a bat and runs out of the dugout.

RONNIE (V.O.)

Wired that way 'cause of his home
life. Father was alcoholic,
mother bible thumper. Stayed at
my house most of the time.

Harry taps another FATHER on the shoulder.

HARRY
50 bucks he gets on base.

A few opposing team PARENTS look over at Harry with contempt.

HARRY (cont'd)
C'mon Looney, get us a run!

Looney takes the bat and hits himself in the helmet, psyching himself up.

RONNIE (V.O.)
He was our best player and my
best friend.

Ronnie, 12, sits in the dugout entering stats into a chart.

RONNIE (V.O.) (cont'd)
I was team manager.

The Coach sends signs to Looney, tapping two fingers on his forearm, grabbing the bill of his cap and clapping his hands.

Ronnie sees this and runs out of the dugout.

RONNIE
Time! Time! Time!

The Umpire looks over like: "Who's running this team?"

Coach's pissed. Looney smirks, he's seen this before.

COACH
What the fuck, Weiss?!

Ronnie approaches the Coach. Everyone waits impatiently. Harry smiles, he too has seen this before.

OPPOSING COACH
C'mon ump! Delay of game.

RONNIE
(whispers to Coach)
Don't bunt.

COACH
We're down by a run. I got a man
on 3rd and one out, he's buntin'.

RONNIE

Looney's hitting .351 over the last 5 games and .360 lifetime.

COACH

Lifetime?! He's fuckin' 14.

RONNIE

He's Ty Cobb is what he is.

Ronnie turns and walks back to the dugout.

RONNIE (cont'd)

Let him swing away.

Reluctantly, the Coach signs for "swing away."

RONNIE (V.O.)

We each had our talents.

Looney smiles and sets up to hit. Cracking a line drive on the first pitch, Looney speeds around the bases. The crowd cheers as he dives head-first into second base.

RONNIE (V.O.) (cont'd)

Numbers came naturally to me. In my DNA.

Looney gets up, dusts himself off and adjusts his cup.

HARRY

Yeah Looney, atta boy!

Harry stands up and cheers.

HARRY (cont'd)

(to Father)

Pay up!

Ronnie jealously watches his father cheering for Looney. He adds another double next to Looney's name.

EXT. FLAMINGO PARK - PARKING LOT - AFTER GAME

Harry, Looney and Ronnie walk towards Harry's beater car. A few OPPOSING PLAYERS and Parents approach.

OPPOSING PLAYER

Hey, Hymie!

Harry, Ronnie and Looney turn around. Looney grips his bat tightly.

Opposing Player gets in Ronnie's face.

Ronnie looks nervous.

OPPOSING PLAYER (cont'd)
How 'bout you pick up a bat and
play like the rest of us?

Harry does nothing.

BAM! Looney jams his bat into the gut of Opposing Player. The kid drops to his knees.

Other Opposing Players and Parents step up, Looney raises his bat, crazed look.

LOONEY
Who else wants some?

RONNIE (V.O.)
Before I even knew we were in a
fight, Looney hit em' and hit em'
hard.

The Opposition backs off.

INT. LOONEY'S THUNDERBIRD - CONTINUOUS

The Valet closes the door behind Ronnie.

RONNIE
Don't show up for work anymore?

LOONEY
Work?

Looney tips his chin towards the door as Rita walks out.

LOONEY (cont'd)
That's your girlfriend talkin'.
Don't be such a pussy.

RONNIE
I'm not being a pussy.

SECURITY follows directly behind her.

Rita slides into the backseat with the bag of win tickets.

Putting the car in drive, Looney looks back at Rita who gives him the finger.

RONNIE (V.O.)

We had the place wired: valets,
security, ticket punchers, you
name it.

Rita greases Security a hundred dollar bill.

RONNIE (V.O.) (cont'd)

At the time, jai alai wasn't
heavily regulated.

INT. GOVERNMENT OFFICE - CENTRAL FLORIDA - DAY

A middle-aged GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL, feet on the desk,
looks over a horse racing form.

RONNIE (V.O.)

You had one schmuck sitting in an
office somewhere in Central
Florida overseeing pari-mutual
betting for the entire state.
Responsible for every horse race,
dog race and jai alai fronton
from the Panhandle to Key West.

STOCK FOOTAGE: Greyhounds chase the rabbit around the
track.

RONNIE (V.O.) (cont'd)

Yeah, good luck with that.

EXT. MIAMI JAI ALAI - CONTINUOUS

Security taps the roof of the car with his pinky ring.

RONNIE (V.O.)

A little greasing the wheels
wasn't just accepted by fronton
owners, it was encouraged.

The Thunderbird pulls away.

RONNIE (V.O.) (cont'd)

The more money we made, the more
we bet. The bigger the action,
the bigger the rake for them.
Win, win.

INT. MIAMI JAI ALAI - NIGHT

SPECTATORS fill the auditorium, watching a match.

RONNIE (V.O.)

See, pari-mutual betting isn't like Vegas where you bet against the house. In pari-mutual, you bet the pool.

INT. MIAMI JAI ALAI - OWNERS BOX - NIGHT

Miami Jai Alai OWNERS, typical businessmen in dark gray suits with their glamorous WIVES, all wearing lobster bibs, eat Joe's Stone Crabs.

RONNIE (V.O.)

The owners take their 17% rake off the top and the winners chop up the rest.

An Owner sucks on a crab claw. Mayonnaise mustard sauce runs down his chin.

RONNIE (V.O.) (cont'd)

All those pigs in the owners box cared about was that we were coming back day after day pumping as much money as we could into the pot.

EXT. THE MUTINY HOTEL - COCONUT GROVE - NIGHT

Ronnie, Rita, and Looney exit the Thunderbird and...

RONNIE (V.O.)

We were on cruise control with millions of dollars of taxable, above-board income flowing in from a betting system that *I* created.

...walk into the lobby and up the elevator to...

INT. MUTINY BAR - PENTHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

...DING! The place is crazy. COCKTAIL WAITRESSES dressed like slutty Santas pass around champagne.

Ronnie and Rita walk to the dance floor.

INT. MUTINY BAR - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Looney bursts into the bathroom, dumps a vile of cocaine onto the counter. He takes out a silver straw engraved "Looney" and snorts the line away.

INT. MUTINY BAR - CONTINUOUS

Ronnie and Rita dance. Ronnie pulls a diamond bracelet from his pocket and hands it to Rita, who smiles.

RONNIE (V.O.)

We had it all. Life was good.

They kiss wildly.

EXT. PALM BEACH JAI ALAI - NIGHT

A palm tree wrapped in Christmas lights blinks, illuminating the: PALM BEACH JAI ALAI sign, as a FIGURE, dressed in black, walks around the fronton to the back exit.

RONNIE (V.O.)

But like the sport that made us rich...

A gloved hand slides a key into the door and the figure enters...

INT. PALM BEACH JAI ALAI - LOCKER ROOM - CONTINUOUS

...where a large storage drum labeled: ALCOHOL sits in the corner.

INT. PALM BEACH JAI ALAI - OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

The figure douses file drawers filled with papers.

INT. PALM BEACH JAI ALAI - AUDITORIUM - CONTINUOUS

The figure douses the auditorium.

I/E. PALM BEACH JAI ALAI - BACK DOOR - MOMENTS LATER

The figure strikes a match and tosses it.

RONNIE (V.O.)
 ...it all went up in a blaze.

A fireball of red as flames engulf the fronton.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. GOVERNMENT OFFICE - CENTRAL FLORIDA - DAY

A fireball fills the eye of the Government official. He drops his feet off the desk and his racing form hits the table.

RONNIE (V.O.)
 That was the fire that brought
 the heat.

FADE OUT:

TITLE CARD: THE FASTEST GAME

INT. VOLKSWAGEN BEETLE - DAY

The noon sun roasts the tiny car packed to the brim with bags and boxes.

Ronnie, 25, scruffier, sweat running down his brow, leans across the passenger seat and rolls the window down.

SUPER: MIAMI BEACH, 8 MONTHS YEARS EARLIER.

A sun shower begins pouring down rain.

Clicking the wipers on, Ronnie rolls the windows up.

RONNIE (V.O.)
 I should've never come back to
 that fucking swamp.

The car immediately steams up.

RONNIE (V.O.) (cont'd)
 But what can I say? It was home.

EXT. SHANKMAN HOME - MIAMI BEACH - CONTINUOUS

Ronnie, looks down at a scribbled address. He pulls into the driveway of an Art Deco, waterfront home with manicured landscaping.

Fancy cars fill the driveway.

RONNIE

What the fuck?

Ronnie shuts off his car and gets out.

INT. SHANKMAN HOME - FOYER - CONTINUOUS

Bags in hand, Ronnie walks into his mother and stepfather's house to a cocktail party in full swing.

A BANNER READS: WELCOME HOME GRADUATE!

ROSE, 55, perfectly made up with teased blonde hair, Pucci shift dress, and statement jewelry, runs over.

ROSE

Everyone, gather round.

Rose kisses Ronnie's cheek, hugs him, tightly.

ROSE (cont'd)

I'm glad you're home.

RONNIE

You done good, Rose.

Leaving a big red lipstick mark on his cheek, Rose turns towards the room filled with her FRIENDS, 50-60's, impeccably dressed.

Ronnie's stepfather, BEN, 65, mimics the sound of a trumpet.

BEN

Ba ba ba baaaaa! Ladies and gentlemen, the man of the hour, Mr. Ronald soon-to-be-the-most-celebrated-lawyer-this-side-of-the-Mississippi, Weiss.

Ronnie stands there, bags in hand.

RONNIE (V.O.)

My stepfather, Ben, was a candy salesman from New York. M&Ms, Turkish Taffy, Schrafft's. Claims he came up with idea to put candy bowls next to the register in every restaurant in America. Retired to Miami to play gin rummy.

Ben walks up to Rose, gives her a kiss on the lips.

BEN

C'mon Ron, say something.

Hired PHOTOGRAPHER flashes a photo, blinding Ronnie.

RONNIE

Thanks.

Ben's annoyed at Ronnie's lack of enthusiasm.

ROSE

The bar's open for business.

BEN

Easy on the top shelf. Sheldon,
that means you.

Ben laughs.

Rose approaches Ronnie.

RONNIE

Where can I find a shower?

ROSE

Hold your horses. Ben has a gift
for you.

(under her breath)

Be nice.

Ben walks up holding a garment bag.

BEN

Congratulations, young man.

Ben unzips the garment bag with a flourish, unveiling a gray suit.

RONNIE

Wow, that's um...

ROSE

It's top of the line Italian.
Straight from Saks Fifth Ave.

BEN

Feel it.

Ronnie makes a "hands full" motion with his bags. Rose snatches the garment bag.

ROSE

I'll take it.

Rose grabs a wrapped gift off a bench.

ROSE (cont'd)

This is from me.

Ronnie drops his bags, accepts the gift and unwraps it.

ROSE (cont'd)

I hope you get good use out of
it.

Ronnie unwraps a brown attache case: RBW embroidered on
the flap in gold.

RONNIE

Thanks, mom. It's beautiful.

Rose, uneasy with the emotion, takes the case and...

ROSE

I'll put everything in your room.

...walks off. Ronnie's left with Ben.

BEN

So, what's the plan, Stan?

RONNIE

Freshin' up. Get a beer.

Ronnie smiles. Ben doesn't.

BEN

You call Bob Breier, yet?

RONNIE

I start first thing Monday.
Clerking while I study for the
bar.

BEN

Good, because he owes me one.
I've given him a lot of business
over the years.

RONNIE

I appreciate it, really.

BEN

And housing?

RONNIE

I haven't...

Ben motions around the house.

BEN

Set sales records for 30 years
for all this. You don't expect to
just slide in the side door, do
ya?

Ben grabs a pig in a blanket off of a passing tray and
shoves it in his mouth.

BEN (cont'd)

(mouth full)

Use that fancy degree of yours.
Become partner somewhere and
in...

RONNIE

...30 years?

Ben nods.

BEN

You could have all this.

Ronnie smiles tightly.

BEN (cont'd)

You don't want to end up like
that father of yours.

Ronnie doesn't react.

BEN (cont'd)

I think it's admirable, coming
home to the battleground where
your father surrendered.

Ronnie nods and smiles.

BEN (cont'd)

Now get those dirty sneakers off
my marble. The laundry room's
back there.

Ronnie pivots, walks through the crowd and kicks open...

INT. LAUNDRY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

...the swinging door, almost striking ALFIE MART, 50's, immaculately dressed in designer shoes, shiny slacks, and a pink button down shirt, talking on the phone.

Alfie looks up, annoyed, but softens when he recognizes Ronnie. Smiling, he holds up his finger, "one second," and motions for Ronnie to come in.

ALFIE

Red Sox, minus 200 at Tigers,
giving 175. It's two to one if
you take Boston.

Ronnie quietly puts his stuff down and heads to a utility sink to freshen up.

ALFIE (cont'd)

Look, handicapping small
favorites and underdogs,
particularly home underdogs,
while watching out for good
pitchers on bad teams can go a
long way in building your
bankroll.

Alfie jots numbers into a little black book with a gold Mont Blanc pen.

RONNIE (V.O.)

Alfie Mart, Miami Beach's
untouchable resident bookmaker,
handled over 100 million a year
in bets.

Alfie winks at Ronnie, who puts on a fresh shirt and jeans.

RONNIE (V.O.) (cont'd)

Even J. Edgar Hoover tried
nailing Alfie to a Las Vegas
racketeering charge, but it
didn't stick.

Ronnie puts on his dirty sneakers.

Closing the pen, Alfie slips it into his shirt pocket embroidered with a gold AM and hangs up the phone.

ALFIE

Look who it is, man of the hour.
How you doin', kid?

RONNIE
Terrible.

ALFIE
Terrific.

Alfie pulls a wad of hundreds and peels off three bills.

ALFIE (cont'd)
Mazel Tov. A little something to
help you enjoy the summer.
(off: his shoes)
Get some loafers.

Ronnie slips the bills into his pocket.

ALFIE (cont'd)
Some party you got out there.

RONNIE
My mother showing off her new
life.

ALFIE
Landed a good one.

Alfie grabs his blazer off a hanger and puts it on.

ALFIE (cont'd)
Wanna get outta here? Skip's over
at the house. He'd love to see
ya.

Ronnie looks relieved.

RONNIE
You don't mind?

ALFIE
Not one iota.

Alfie puts his hand on Ronnie's shoulder and smiles.

ALFIE (cont'd)
Gotta make a quick stop.

The two walk out the side door.

INT. ROLLS ROYCE CORNICHE CONVERTIBLE - MOMENTS LATER

The sun goes down over Miami Beach as Alfie cruises
north on AlA, top down, windows up.

Alfie takes out a Cohiba and pushes in the lighter.

ALFIE

Take the wheel.

The lighter pops.

Ronnie holds the wheel while Alfie presses the red hot coil to the tip of his cigar, turning it in circles, illuminating his face as he puffs.

Alfie deposits the lighter, and puts his hand back on the wheel.

ALFIE (cont'd)

Your mother said you sailed through law school, top of your class?

Alfie takes a big puff.

ALFIE (cont'd)

You gonna practice?

RONNIE

Gotta pass the bar first, but that's the plan.

ALFIE

Don't seem too excited.

Ronnie shrugs.

ALFIE (cont'd)

That's 'cause you're your father's son. Workin' behind a desk ain't in your blood.

RONNIE

My father was a coward.

ALFIE

Hey, don't talk like that. He loved your mother and you.

RONNIE

Then he wouldn'ta done what he did.

ALFIE

One of the sharpest guys I knew, could see a play five steps ahead, just couldn't color within the lines of life.

Ronnie looks out the window at a strip of hotels. In his mind's eye, projected in the reflection of his passenger side window, a MAN falls from one of the buildings.

RONNIE (V.O.)

My father took a swan dive out
the tenth floor window of the
Eden Roc hotel when I was 16.
Becoming him was my biggest fear.

Ronnie traces the trajectory of the fall with his finger on the window, continuing down to the window button and lowering it as if wiping the image away.

They hit a pothole. Ash falls on Alfie's pink shirt.

ALFIE

Shit, hand me a tissue in the
glove box.

Ronnie opens the glove compartment. A nickel plated 9mm sits next to the tissue box. Ronnie grabs a tissue and hands it to Alfie who rubs the ash.

Alfie turns into a dark parking lot.

EXT. MIAMI BEACH - BEACH PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

The Rolls Royce headlights illuminate a parked Cadillac.

Two GANGSTERS exit the Cadi in slacks, terrycloth shirts, and gold necklaces with Star of David ornaments.

Grabbing a THIRD MAN out of the back seat, they throw him to the concrete.

Alfie puts the car in park, leaving it running.
Headlights frame the scene.

He takes out his gold Mont Blanc and puts it in the center console.

ALFIE

This'll just take a minute.

Alfie walks towards the three Men.

Standing over the beaten Man, Alfie smacks him a few times in the face.

Alfie looks back in Ronnie's direction, making eye contact, before raising his foot and driving his heel into the Man's forearm, breaking his humerus.

Ronnie turns away.

Alfie walks back and gets in the car.

ALFIE (cont'd)
Deadbeat motherfucker.

EXT. MART HOUSE - BAL HARBOR - LATER

Ronnie and Alfie pull into the driveway of Alfie's upper middle class home and park.

ALFIE
Skip should be out back.

Ronnie reaches for the door handle, Alfie grabs his shoulder.

ALFIE (cont'd)
Your father was like a brother to me, you need anything...

Ronnie eyes a spec of blood on Alfie's cheek.

RONNIE
Thanks, Mr. Mart.

Alfie squeezes his shoulder and smiles.

ALFIE
Welcome home.

INT. COHEN, STEVENS, & BREIER LAW FIRM (C, S & B) - DAY

Ronnie, wearing the suit, tours the office with a middle aged RECEPTIONIST.

RECEPTIONIST
That's Mr. Breier's office.

Ronnie looks at BOB BREIER, 60's, pacing his office on a conference call. Bob sees Ronnie and closes the door.

RECEPTIONIST (cont'd)
You sit over there.

She points to a little cubicle.

EXT. SHANKMAN HOME - EARLY EVENING

Ronnie pulls into the driveway, still dressed from work.

Looney, 27, thin frame and sunken cheeks, leans on his beat-up 1970 Chevy.

Ronnie parks and gets out. Ronnie stares at Looney, shocked at his friend's appearance.

LOONEY

I look like shit, huh?

Ronnie walks towards Looney.

RONNIE

You surprised me's all.

The two embrace.

INT. DEUCE BAR - LATER

Ronnie and Looney sit in the dimly lit bar. Looney smokes a cigarette.

LOONEY

My first tour we were down in Thua Thien province movin' supplies. Met some good guys. And the women over there, Ronnie. The women.

Looney bites his knuckle and leans back.

LOONEY (cont'd)

I remember thinking, shit, I could get used to this. It wasn't 'till my second tour that shit got real.

Looney looks at his drink and spins it, going somewhere else.

LOONEY (cont'd)

I heard you were back and knew it was a fuckin' sign.

Looney slides the Miami Herald sports section across the bar.

Ronnie reads the headline: "TRIFECTA BET INTRODUCED AT MIAMI JAI ALAI."

RONNIE

A sign?

LOONEY

Ronnie man, the place's changed.
It's not like when we were
sneakin' in bettin' pennies with
your dad. When I got back, I was
bored out of my mind, desperate
for some fuckin' action.

INT. LOONEY'S APARTMENT - FLASHBACK - EVENING

Looney sits alone on the couch in his dingy studio
apartment smoking a joint.

LOONEY (O.S)

Guy I used to hang with in
Saigon...

INT. SAIGON BAR - FLASHBACK - DAY

PAPA RICO, 30's, jolly, sits at the bar draped in
VIETNAMESE PROSTITUTES. Looney sits next to him.

LOONEY (O.S.)

...big Cuban motherfucker, Papa
Rico. Loved that I was from Miami
and he'd go on and on about...

Papa Rico stands pretending to talk into a microphone as
we hear Looney...

LOONEY (O.S.) (cont'd)

(Cuban announcer
voice)

"Miami Jai Alai. The Palace of
Champions."

Freeze frame on Papa Rico, mid-gesticulation:

RONNIE (V.O.)

To be clear, without this fucking
crazy Cuban, none of this
would've ever happened.

Action continues as Looney grabs one of the Prostitutes.

LOONEY (O.S.)

Rico played back in Havana, and
now he's the announcer at Miami
Jai Alai.

Papa Rico looks around the bar as if a big crowd is
watching -- SOUND -- crowd roars.

INT. DEUCE BAR - CONTINUOUS

LOONEY

I'd tell him, man, I grew up in Miami. Some fuckin' fresh-off-the-boat's not gonna tell me what's what. He made me promise to check it out when we got home.

(beat)

If we got home.

EXT. MIAMI JAI ALAI - FLASHBACK - NIGHT

A NEON SIGN ON THE BUILDING FLASHES: "Miami Jai Alai"

LOONEY (O.S.)

So one night, I take a ride over the bridge.

Looney stands looking up at the blinking sign.

A metallic beige Jaguar SJX screeches up to the valet. The OWNER hops out, throws the keys to the ATTENDANT and walks inside with a beautiful GIRL half his age.

Looney follows them with his eyes.

LOONEY (O.S.) (cont'd)

You can't imagine the action, Ron. I'm talkin' thousands of people, from all walks.

A bus full of sunburned TOURISTS and SENIORS pulls up.

LOONEY (O.S.) (cont'd)

Busloads of 'em ready to sign over their pensions and medicare checks.

Looney follows the Tourists into the fronton.

INT. MIAMI JAI ALAI - FLASHBACK - CONTINUOUS

The who's who of Miami pack the place: GLAMOROUS WOMEN, SLICK BUSINESSMEN, in all their 70's glory.

LOONEY (O.S.)

You got VIP's livin' it up.

The atmosphere's electric and Looney feeds off the energy.

LOONEY (O.S.) (cont'd)

And big-time gamblers pumping
money into the handle night after
night.

GAMBLERS of all kinds fill the stands and the THWACK of
a pelota hitting the wall can be heard over the buzz.

Everyone's heads swivel back and forth with the action.

INT. DEUCE BAR - CONTINUOUS

Looney finishes his drink and motions to the bartender.
Ronnie nurses his beer.

LOONEY

The handle ranges between 500k to
a million a night. It's a
goddamned goldmine.

RONNIE

So, what, you wanna rob the
place?

LOONEY

Your father understood the game
like nobody else. He planted a
seed.

INT. MIAMI JAI ALAI - FLASHBACK - DAY

Ronnie, 12, Looney, 14 and Harry, 42, sit in the stands.

RONNIE

Who should we bet on?

LOONEY

Who's the best player?

HARRY

Irrelevant. Skill plays no part
when betting.

Looney looks puzzled.

HARRY (cont'd)

Statistically speaking, any
single point can be won or lost
by any player in any game,
regardless of anything.

Ronnie sits up, proud of his dad.

RONNIE

Just like any single point in tennis.

HARRY

That's right, Ronnie. Forget about handicapping the players. You'll die a thousand deaths and go broke. It's all about the numbers. They never lie.

Looney tries to keep up.

HARRY (cont'd)

Which is why?

RONNIE

Anyone betting the skill of the players is...

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. DEUCE BAR - CONTINUOUS

RONNIE

...gonna lose as much as they win.

LOONEY

Your father understood that people bet the sport wrong. They go in asking who's the best player, pump their money in, and walk away with nothing but a buzz and a good story. Since I got back, I've been searching. Trying to understand what's next for me. And then I see this headline, and I fucking knew. This is our ticket.

RONNIE

Jai alai? That's your big plan?

LOONEY

These new trifecta bets are high risk, high reward. If I had the brains to analyze the numbers, I'd come up with a system to win big. But, I don't and you do.

RONNIE

...Even if I wanted to help you.

RONNIE (V.O.)
Which I didn't.

Ronnie picks up the Herald.

RONNIE
I'd need the numbers. Thousands
of Win, Place and Show results
for thousands of matches. They
don't exist.

Looney has no answer.

RONNIE (V.O.)
Remember, this was before Google.
No one had those kinda stats at
their fingertips.

RONNIE
I came home to do something with
my life, not follow in Harry's
footsteps.

Ronnie gets up.

LOONEY
I should've known you wouldn't
have the balls.

This cuts deep.

RONNIE
Good seeing you, man. Glad you're
home safe.

Ronnie goes to hand Looney the Herald.

LOONEY
You keep it.

Ronnie walks out of the bar, paper in hand.

EXT. C, S & B LAW FIRM - COURTYARD - DAY

Ronnie sits by himself eating a sandwich.

INT. C, S & B LAW FIRM - EVENING

Ronnie, one of the last people left in the office,
studies for the bar exam.

Receptionist grabs her purse.

RECEPTIONIST

Turn the lights off when you
leave.

INT. C, S & B LAW FIRM - DAY

Ronnie, wearing the same suit sits at a conference table -- TIME LAPSE DISSOLVE -- The world and his ties change over and over again as the summer passes. Ronnie stays in the same spot.

EXT. SHANKMAN HOME - DUSK

Ronnie pulls into the driveway as Alfie's Gangsters pull out in their Cadillac.

INT. SHANKMAN HOME - CONTINUOUS

Ronnie walks into the kitchen. Rose, hands shaking, stands at the counter pouring a cocktail.

RONNIE

What'd Alfie's guys want?

Rose walks past him and sits at the kitchen table.

ROSE

None of your business.

RONNIE

You're shaking. Why were they
here?

She doesn't respond.

RONNIE (cont'd)

I'll go ask Alfie myself.

ROSE

Don't you dare.

RONNIE

Then start talking.

ROSE

Your father owed Alfie.

Ronnie sighs, upset.

RONNIE

How much?

ROSE
I don't need you worrying about
this.

Ronnie heads towards the front door.

ROSE (cont'd)
250 thousand.

Ronnie stops in his tracks.

RONNIE
That's a fortune.

ROSE
I've managed to scrape together
around 75 over the years. Now he
wants me to go to Ben for the
rest.

Rose drags her cigarette and exhales.

ROSE (cont'd)
Ben finds out he'll leave me.
Don't I deserve to be happy?

RONNIE
He won't find out.

Ronnie walks out.

ROSE
Don't get involved! You hear me?!

INT. RONNIE'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Ronnie speeds down the road.

RONNIE (V.O.)
In 1975 \$175,000 had the same
buying power as \$818,368.96 in
today's dollars. Which is more
than Ben had saved throughout his
entire career. Given the choice
between parting with his
retirement or his new bride, I
think we all know the answer.

EXT. ALFIE'S NEWSSTAND - MINUTES LATER

Ronnie screeches up to the newsstand and walks in.

INT. ALFIE'S NEWSSTAND - CONTINUOUS

A soda counter and long rows of magazines line the walls. Alfie and his Gangsters sit at the end of the counter, smoking cigars, reading the paper, and drinking malted milks.

RONNIE

My fucking mother?

ALFIE

Easy kid. Go slow. Get him a malted.

RONNIE

You say my dad was your best fucking friend? Like a brother?

ALFIE

Don't get emotional.

RONNIE

Now I know what pushed him.

ALFIE

He jumped. Don't lay that on me.

RONNIE

Leave her out of this. She's been through enough.

ALFIE

Business is business. You think most people get that long to pay a debt? I did your mother a solid, out of love for her and your father, but 250K's alotta colada.

RONNIE

Why's this her responsibility?

ALFIE

Your father's gone. She was smart, made herself valuable. Now she has a new husband and no longer in a position to do so.

This information hits Ronnie like a ton of bricks.

RONNIE

You'd blow up her whole life?

ALFIE

I should be stuck holding the bag? What am I, a schmuck? A charity paying for their house on the water and fancy parties? I've been patient, but she's improved her situation. She's back on the clock.

RONNIE

Consider it my debt.

Alfie scoffs.

ALFIE

Law clerking for minimum wage?

RONNIE

Let me worry about that.

ALFIE

Okay, big man. The debt's on you. You owe me 175K. Get me 75 in the next month and we'll figure out a payment plan after that. My gift to you. Otherwise, my next visit's to Ben and I won't be so friendly.

INT. RONNIE'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Ronnie drives, wheels spinning in his head.

ALFIE (O.S.)

She was smart, made herself valuable.

In Ronnie's minds eye...

INT. FONTAINEBLEAU HOTEL - NIGHT

Rose, nervous, moves down a hallway towards the Penthouse. The door opens, she walks in and it closes behind her.

A truck speeds by blasting it's horn.

RONNIE

Fuuuuuck!

I/E. C, S & B LAW FIRM - BOB BREIER'S OFFICE - DAY

Ronnie knocks on the doorway of Bob's office.

RONNIE
Mr. Breier.

BOB
Come in, Weiss.

Ronnie crosses to Bob's desk.

BOB (cont'd)
Things okay?

RONNIE
Yes, everything's great.

BOB
You ready for the bar?

RONNIE
Almost.

BOB
Something I can help you with?

RONNIE
Actually, I'm in a bit of a bind.

Bob motions for Ronnie to take a seat.

RONNIE (cont'd)
I was wondering if I could get an
advance.

BOB
Advance?

RONNIE
On my future salary.

BOB
How much you need?

RONNIE
\$75,000.

Bob sits back in his chair, shocked.

BOB
What've you gotten yourself into?

Ronnie doesn't answer.

BOB (cont'd)

That's more than an entire first year associate salary.

RONNIE

I'll work until it's paid off, plus interest.

BOB

Couldn't if I wanted to. I have overhead: employees, insurance.

RONNIE

I understand.

BOB

Have you spoken to Ben? He may be able to help.

RONNIE

No, and I'd prefer if you kept this conversation between us.

Bob exhales, thinks.

BOB

Gimme a dollar.

RONNIE

Excuse me?

BOB

C'mon, gimme a dollar.

Confused, Ronnie reaches into his pocket and takes out a dollar.

BOB (cont'd)

Now you're a client, so I'll give you the privilege.

RONNIE

I appreciate it.

Ronnie gets up and turns to leave.

BOB

Ronnie, should I be worried?

RONNIE

No, it's under control.

INT. SHANKMAN HOUSEHOLD - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Ronnie walks in, drained.

Ben and his friends SETH and VICTOR, 60's, smoke cigars on the couch. Michigan State vs. USC basketball blares on the TV. Michigan's winning.

SETH

All I'm saying is if they landed on the moon, we would've seen something other than a few measly pictures.

VICTOR

What about the moon rock?

SETH

Gimme a break.

BEN

Why would they fake it?

SETH

You ever heard of the arms race?

Ronnie goes to the bar sink and washes his face.

SETH (cont'd)

Also, it served as a distraction.

BEN

What did?

SETH

The moon.

(holds up his Zippo)
NASA held up some shiny moon rock with one hand, while the U.S. military rammed Vietnam up our asses with the other.

VICTOR

Quiet! Two minutes left.

BEN

Michigan State's up seven, relax.

Ronnie pours himself a scotch.

BEN (cont'd)

Easy on the top shelf. When you gonna start chipping in?

Ben laughs to his friends.

BEN (cont'd)

Kid comes home from college and
thinks I'm running a boarding
house.

Ronnie zones out.

BEN (cont'd)

Ronnie!

Ronnie snaps to.

BEN (cont'd)

Rent's due.

Ben laughs again.

VICTOR

Leave him alone. I'm trying to
watch the game.

BEN

Game's a lock, pay up.

SETH

I don't pay 'til it's over.

BEN

Nobody's gonna pay me?! Seth, pay
up!

VICTOR

Shut up! Shut up! Shut up!

SETH

It's not fucking over.

The room closes in on Ronnie. He's gonna pop.

BEN

Pay me! Pay me! Pay me!

VICTOR

Quiet! Quiet! Quiet!

The game blasts on the T.V.

Ronnie's head spins.

RONNIE

ENOUGH! Everybody SHUT UUUUUUP!

The room goes quiet, except for the game. All the Men
look up at Ronnie.

RONNIE (cont'd)

You're the worst gamblers I've ever seen. Michigan State's gonna lose.

Ben looks at Ronnie like he's crazy.

RONNIE (cont'd)

All Michigan's done all game is hoist up three pointers. They can't get their inside game going and USC has one of the best defenses in the paint. Michigan's been shooting around 40%, which is already way above their average. They're done. USC's defense will win out. Watch.

SETH

The hell you know?

USC steals the ball. The PLAYER runs down the court and score. It's a five point game.

RONNIE

I read the newspaper. They publish the stats every morning. Number's don't lie.

A light bulb goes off in Ronnie's head.

Michigan hoists up another three pointer. It hits the rim, USC snags the rebound, pushes the ball up the court and scores.

VICTOR

Smart kid. Get your wallet's out.

Ronnie runs out of the house, slamming the door.

INT. RONNIE'S CAR - LATER

Ronnie and Looney race over the Venetian Causeway from Miami Beach, driving into the parking lot of...

I/E. MIAMI HERALD - DAY

Ronnie and Looney run into the lobby and up to the reception desk.

RONNIE

Excuse me, where can we find the archives?

INT. MIAMI HERALD - ARCHIVES - CONTINUOUS

RECEPTIONIST walks them into the stacks. Rows and rows of newspapers piled as far, wide, and high as the eye can see.

RONNIE

Sports sections?

RECEPTIONIST

Just dates, honey.

Ronnie and Looney look up and down at the stacks.

EXT. MIAMI HERALD - LATER

Ronnie and Looney walk out of the building, dejected.

I/E. RONNIE'S CAR - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Ronnie pulls up to Looney's building.

LOONEY

What made you change your mind?

RONNIE

What's the difference?

Looney gets out and Ronnie drives off.

INT. RONNIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Ronnie sits on the edge of his bed, looking down at the jai alai article in the Miami Herald.

He clicks his lamp off. BLACK.

INT. C, S & B LAW FIRM - CONFERENCE ROOM - AFTERNOON

Ronnie sits at a conference table with Bob and POTENTIAL CLIENTS, facing the glass wall that looks out into the open office.

BOB

What we offer is a comprehensive plan to ensure you come through the other side of this merger with a rock solid financial restructuring that'll save you a lot of money and stand up to any audit.

Ronnie takes notes. Looking up, his eyes go wide as Looney walks into the office wearing ratty jeans, a t-shirt, and a week-long beard with a cigarette dangling from his mouth.

CLIENT

You think we'll get audited?

Looney leans down to talk to the Receptionist, who points towards the conference room.

BOB

You never know with the IRS. Why take the chance?

Bob follows Ronnie's gaze to see Looney approaching.

BOB (cont'd)

(to himself)

What the fuck?

Looney slams both hands onto the glass partition, displaying jai alai programs.

LOONEY

We hit the fuckin' mother load!

Looney grins, gripping his cigarette in his teeth.

Everyone in the room's shocked. Ronnie looks at Bob, mortified. Bob sees red.

INT. LOONEY'S CAR - MINUTES LATER

Looney drives.

LOONEY

Saturday night. We were partying at Rico's after the matches.

INT. PAPA RICO'S APARTMENT - FLASHBACK - NIGHT

Looney sits on the couch surrounded by people.

A SEXY CUBAN in a skimpy red dress grabs Looney's hand and leads him towards the back of the apartment.

INT. PAPA RICO'S APARTMENT - GUEST ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The Sexy Cuban pushes him down on the bed. Crawling on top of him, she unzips his pants and pulls them down.

Slithering up the length of his body.

SEXY CUBAN
(whispering)
Quiero verte (I want to see you.)

She clicks on the lamp, dropping to her knees.

SEXY CUBAN (cont'd)
Abre tus ojos (Open your eyes).

Looney opens his eyes, through his drugged-out haze he sees the walls papered with jai alai programs and bags of programs stacked across the length of the room.

Jumping up, Looney knocks the girl onto her back and shimmies, pants around his ankles, towards the bags.

SEXY CUBAN (cont'd)
What the fuck?

Looney rips a program off the wall and flips to the back page, with its Win, Place, and Show results.

Looney rushes out of the room tripping as he pulls up his pants.

EXT. PAPA RICO'S APARTMENT - DAY

Ronnie and Looney stand at the door. Looney knocks.

LOONEY
He's a fuckin' night owl.

The door opens and Papa Rico stands in a silk robe over boxers and a wife beater.

PAPA RICO
Qué carajo, brothe'?!

Looney smiles.

INT. PAPA RICO'S APARTMENT - GUEST ROOM - LATER**SUPER: THE SYSTEM**

Ronnie dumps a bag of programs onto the bed.

RONNIE

Turned out, Rico was a huge pack rat. Had a treasure trove of over 4,000 jai alai programs from prior seasons listing every match's result.

Ronnie and Looney pour through programs.

RONNIE (V.O.)

At that time, no trifecta statistics had been compiled because the bet was brand new. We had to go through every program and chart the win, place, show results for every match.

TIME LAPSE -- Ronnie and Looney fill out a huge accounting ledger with win, place, show results.

RONNIE (V.O.) (cont'd)

My dad made two assumptions we were trying to prove.

Ronnie writes out "Principal Assumption #1" on a white board...

RONNIE (V.O.) (cont'd)

Any point can be won or lost by any player regardless of skill.

...which morphs into...

INT. MIAMI JAI ALAI - DAY

A PLAYER flings the pelota at the front wall - the ball ricochets from wall to wall.

RONNIE (V.O.)

A good or bad serve, a kill shot return, a muff or dropped ball, a violation, a put-a-way, misjudgment, miscommunication, a bad bounce...

PLAYER 2 runs to the ball and leaps off the side wall reaching high in the air. The pelota hits Player 2's cesta and drops to the ground. Point over.

RONNIE (V.O.) (cont'd)
 ...a bad night with the wife, too much drinking, too many drugs, too much pussy and a thousand other reasons contribute to any lost point.

INT. PAPA RICO'S APARTMENT - GUEST ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ronnie writes "Principal Assumption #2."

RONNIE (V.O.)
 Spectacular Seven scoring gives the advantage to players in certain post positions.

INT. MIAMI JAI ALAI - FRONTON - DAY

PLAYERS line up on the bench, waiting to go out.

RONNIE (V.O.)
 Every game starts with the 1st post position serving to the 2nd post position, and so on.

Players in post position's three through eight sit on a bench waiting their turn to play. They watch as Player 2 slam the ball crushing the point.

RONNIE (V.O.) (cont'd)
 The 1st player to reach seven points, wins.

PLAYER 3 gets up to take on Player 2; 1 walks to the back of the bench.

RONNIE (V.O.) (cont'd)
 Unfortunately, that was taking too long. So, the owners introduced Spectacular Seven scoring which increased the reward for each winning volley after the 1st round from 1 to 2 points. Speeding up the game. Creating more action. Raking in more moolah.

Round robin play -- FAST MOTION -- and we see point after point, with different Players getting up and returning to the bench.

RONNIE (V.O.)

By losing a single volley late in the game, a player can go from first to worst; sit at the end of the bench, and never play again. It's ruthless.

A Player loses a point and slams his cesta onto the granite floor in frustration. He knows he's fucked, and walks towards the end of the bench.

INT. PAPA RICO'S APARTMENT - GUEST ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ronnie runs around the room, charting numbers, energized.

Looney snorts a bump off the back of his hand.

RONNIE (V.O.)

The seventh and eighth positions are at a serious disadvantage because players starting closer to the *front* of the line have more opportunity to score points.

TIME LAPSE -- programs stack neatly against the walls. Piles grow taller and taller.

RONNIE

If we're right, out of the 336 possible Trifecta combinations certain numbers should come in more frequently. Others will never come in or only once in a blue moon. So why bet them?

Ronnie turns around.

RONNIE (cont'd)

Loon?

Looney isn't there.

INT. PAPA RICO'S APARTMENT - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Ronnie walks out of the back room and stretches. He walks into the kitchen and he gets a glass of water.

Ronnie sees Looney talking on the phone.

LOONEY

I'll take Miami plus 2,
Washington State minus 4, and
Foreman in 5.

Ronnie takes note.

INT. PAPA RICO'S APARTMENT - GUEST ROOM - DAY

Ronnie, rocking a week-old beard, quietly concentrates, studying the numbers on the big ledger.

Looney, pacing around, lights a cigarette. Ronnie stands up and looks at the charted combinations on the spreadsheet to see the frequency patterns for each one.

RONNIE

Now that we know how many times
each Trifecta combination comes
in from our sample of 4,000
results we need to figure out the
break-even payoffs for each of
the 336 possibilities.

Grabbing the cigarette from Looney's hand, Ronnie takes a drag and slowly nods his head.

RONNIE (cont'd)

We gotta know how to bet em'.

LOONEY

How the fuck we do that?

RONNIE

Divide the number of times each
combination comes in from the
4,000 results. At \$2 per
combination it would cost us
\$8,000 to bet that number every
game.

(beat)

For example, if the 4-3-1
Trifecta came in 40 times and we
invested \$8,000 betting it every
game then it would have to pay
\$200 for us to break even.

Ronnie writes this out on the big board.

RONNIE (cont'd)

If a more difficult combination comes in 12 times like the 8-7-4 and we invested \$8,000 betting it every game over the next 4,000 games then it would have to pay \$666 for us to break even.

LOONEY

Am I supposed to understand what the fuck you're talking about?

RONNIE

Give me twenty-four hours and I'll have a list of our first round of bets.

LOONEY

Fuck I do?

RONNIE

We need funds to test the system.

Looney nods.

LOONEY

That, I can do.

INT. MIAMI JAI ALAI - NIGHT

Ronnie and Looney walk into the fronton. It's hopping. Ronnie looks around, mesmerized.

LOONEY

What'd I tell you?

Ronnie spots a man in the corner who looks exactly like his father.

LOONEY (cont'd)

Ron, you with me?

Ronnie snaps back, turning away from the memory.

INT. MIAMI JAI ALAI - AUDITORIUM - MOMENTS LATER

Ronnie and Looney sit in the stands. People begin to fill in the seats for the night.

LOONEY

The seventh game starts in a few minutes.

(MORE)

LOONEY (cont'd)
That's when the after dinner
crowd shows up and the money gets
real.

Ronnie hands Looney a piece of paper.

RONNIE
These combinations came in with
the highest frequency and the
lowest break-even points.

Looney examines the list as if it holds the key to the
universe.

LOONEY
I can't believe we're actually
doing this!

Ronnie smiles, unsure.

RONNIE (V.O.)
That was only half the list, but
we didn't have the luxury or
funds to test the long shots.

Looney hands the list back and takes out an envelope of
cash.

LOONEY
How much wiggle room does three
grand buy us?

RONNIE
About two days.

Looney sticks out his hand.

LOONEY
Good luck, partner.

RONNIE
If we're right, luck should have
nothing to do with it.

Ronnie takes Looney's hand.

RONNIE (cont'd)
Looney, no more gambling. We work
the system. That's it or I walk.

Looney takes a beat.

LOONEY
Deal.

They shake.

INT. MIAMI JAI ALAI - AUDITORIUM - MINUTES LATER

Ronnie and Looney watch the match intently.

PLAYER after PLAYER rotate on and off the bench. Points are won and lost.

The scoreboard clicks to the seventh game.

1-4-2 appears on the scoreboard. Ronnie marks a "W" next to 1-4-2 on his sheet.

They lose the eighth game. Ronnie crosses it out, looking nervous.

The ninth game starts. The point goes back and fourth.

RONNIE

Moment of truth.

The sixth player wins, pumps his fist and sits down. Ronnie circles the number and marks it "W."

PLAYER 5 and PLAYER 2 playoff for Place and Show. Looney grips the back of the seat in front of him and Ronnie closes his eyes.

RONNIE (cont'd)

We need player 5.

LOONEY

Come on 5, come on!

Player 2 over-serves the playoff point and loses.

6-5-2 hits for the win!

The scoreboard next to the court and T.V. screens in standing room areas flash the winning numbers: 6-5-2, 6-5-2, 6-5-2.

RONNIE (V.O)

Only one ticket that night was sold with the winning combination.

The screen flashes the winning payout: \$10,000, \$10,000, \$10,000.

The place goes crazy. The electricity in the air and noise levels throughout are deafening.

Looney leaps up.

Ronnie smiles, dazed.

RONNIE (V.O.)

We walked away with 13 grand and
never looked back.

INT. MIAMI JAI ALAI - NIGHT

Cash fans through the machine.

Ronnie, in brand new white sneakers, tight bell bottom jeans and a terry cloth polo, stands in front of the cashier, MAUREEN, 50's, blue hair, who pushes ten thousand dollar stacks toward him.

RONNIE (V.O.)

Once we had a decent stake, we
kept applying our system and it
kept delivering. As time went
on...

CU ON: Half-written list of combinations. New numbers start to appear down the page, filling in the negative space.

RONNIE (V.O.) (cont'd)

...we added and dropped
combinations, increasing the size
of our list and betting the long
shots.

Ronnie rubs his eyes, tired.

RONNIE (V.O.) (cont'd)

We bet 84 games a week for six
weeks. I felt 500 games was
enough to let the system work.
That meant that one of us had to
be at the fronton every match,
without fail.

Ronnie takes a crisp hundred off the top and slides it to Maureen.

RONNIE

Thanks, Maureen.

Maureen smiles. Ronnie walks down the hall.

RONNIE (V.O.)

If we missed betting games, we missed payoffs on combos that we were invested in. The general public bet lists sporadically and missed their payoffs when combos came in and they were home watching Happy Days.

HAPPY DAYS FOOTAGE FILLS THE SCREEN: Fonzie gives two thumbs up and his catchphrase, "Aaayyyy."

RONNIE (V.O.) (cont'd)

Gotta love the G.P.

INT. MIAMI JAI ALAI - AUDITORIUM - CONTINUOUS

Ronnie walks through the auditorium.

RONNIE

It took only six weeks to get Alfie his 75k. Six fuckin' weeks.

EXT. ALFIE'S NEWSSTAND - DAY

Ronnie's walks into the newsstand with his attaché case.

RONNIE (V.O.)

Told him I took an advance on future earnings. He didn't give a shit as long as he got his money.

INT. MIAMI FRONTON - TICKET WINDOW - CONTINUOUS

Ronnie walks past the ticket punchers.

RONNIE (V.O.)

I put enough back to work the system, pay Looney his share and scrape together a few bucks for new clothes.

INT. MIAMI FRONTON - EXIT - CONTINUOUS

Ronnie approaches the exit.

He notices a CREEPER in a brown leather jacket.

RONNIE (V.O.)

Eventually, word spread about our golden touch...

Pushing off the wall, Creeper slips brass knuckles onto his hand. Ronnie turns and walks the opposite direction.

RONNIE (V.O.) (cont'd)

...which exposed us to undesirables.

Creeper gains on Ronnie who picks up the pace and ducks into the VIP cocktail lounge, nodding to a SECURITY GUARD.

Creeper tries following Ronnie, but can't get past the velvet rope.

INT. MIAMI JAI ALAI - VIP COCKTAIL LOUNGE - CONTINUOUS

Ronnie sits at the bar and flags the BARTENDER.

RONNIE

Terry, could I use your phone?

TERRY puts the phone on the bar and walks away. Ronnie dials and waits. The phone rings and rings.

Ronnie hangs up, annoyed, as Terry walks back over.

TERRY

All set?

Ronnie nods and Terry puts the phone back.

RONNIE

Seven and seven.

INT. VIP COCKTAIL LOUNGE - MINUTES LATER

Ronnie sips his drink and searches the room for Creeper. His eyes fall instead on a Cocktail Waitress, who we recognize as Rita, making her way across the room, balancing a tray of drinks.

She looks at Ronnie, they lock eyes. BANG! A PATRON knocks into her tray, sending drinks flying.

Terry rushes over with a bar towel. Everyone, including Ronnie, watches the commotion.

TERRY

Jesus, Rita.

RITA

I'm sorry, he popped up outta nowhere.

PATRON

You should watch where you're going, bitch.

Rita picks a drink up off the table next to her...

RITA

My apologies, this one's on the house.

...and throws it in the guy's face. People laugh. A few women clap.

Terry tries to dry the guy off. Looks at Rita.

TERRY

You're fired.

RITA

Over this asshole?

TERRY

Adios.

RITA

Fuck you, Terry.

Ronnie tracks Rita as she walks toward the exit door, kicks it open, and disappears into the night.

EXT. MIAMI JAI ALAI - PARKING LOT - LATER

Ronnie walks out of the fronton, his attaché case tightly under his arm.

Ronnie puts the key in his car door. BAM, brass knuckles rock the side of his head and he falls to the ground.

Creeper violently grabs the attaché case and takes the money, leaving the case behind.

INT. LOONEY'S APARTMENT - THE NEXT MORNING

Ronnie sits at the kitchen table with an ice pack.

RONNIE

I tried calling!

LOONEY

How much?

RONNIE

Ten grand. Where the fuck were you?

LOONEY

Whaddya want me to do, wait by the fuckin' phone?

RONNIE

Or be there to back me up?

LOONEY

I spend as many hours in that place as you do.

Ronnie thinks about that.

RONNIE

I don't know how much longer we can do this.

LOONEY

The fuck you talkin' about? We'll hire security.

RONNIE

It's not just security. The pace, the hours. The whole thing's unsustainable.

LOONEY

We're making a fucking fortune. Now you wanna quit?

RONNIE

I want to scale.

Looney smiles.

LOONEY

Tell me what you need.

EXT. RITA'S HOUSE - LITTLE HAVANA - DUSK

Ronnie walks up to a one-story island-style bungalow and knocks. Salsa music plays through the open windows.

Rita opens the door.

RITA
What're you doing here?

RONNIE
I felt a little responsible for what happened at the fronton. I wanna apologize.

RITA
How'd you find me?

RONNIE
Asked the right people.

RITA
Terry's an asshole, I needed a new job anyway.

CUBAN MAN
Rita, hora de la cena.

RITA
I gotta go.

LARGE CUBAN MAN, 49, slim build with a mustache and an unbuttoned Guayabera, comes to the door.

RONNIE
Oh, sorry, I didn't realize you're...

RITA
...This is my father.

RITA'S FATHER
Quién es?

RITA
Un amigo del trabajo.

Ronnie extends his hand.

RONNIE
Ronnie Weiss.

Rita's father doesn't shake Ronnie's hand.

RITA'S FATHER
We're sitting down for Shabbat dinner. Come in if you're staying.

He walks back into the house.

RONNIE

You're Jewban?

Ronnie looks at Rita like she's too good to be true.

RITA

He doesn't want to stay papa.

Ronnie walks past Rita through the doorway.

RONNIE

I'm starved.

INT. RITA'S HOUSE - LITTLE HAVANA - LATER

Rita's father lights candles and says the Shabbat prayer.

Ronnie, wearing a Yarmulke, keeps his eyes glued on Rita - who's not so sure she likes it.

EXT. CALLE OCHO (SW 8TH ST.) - LITTLE HAVANA - LATER

Ronnie and Rita walk past bustling bars and restaurants blaring Cuban music.

RITA

So you gamble for a living?

RONNIE

It's not gambling if you don't lose.

RITA

So you cheat?

Ronnie laughs.

RONNIE

No. I analyzed past winning numbers based on certain variables unique to the game and when the trifecta bet was introduced...um...

Ronnie looks over at Rita, insecure.

RONNIE (cont'd)

...You don't want to hear this, it's boring.

RITA

Boring?! You just told me that you figured out a way to do what legions of gamblers have been trying to do for centuries - with a pencil and paper. That's about the least boring thing I've ever heard.

Ronnie's impressed by Rita's ability to keep up.

RITA (cont'd)

Keep going.

Ronnie considers if he should and then...

RONNIE

So, we knew that people bet the whole sport wrong...

Ronnie talks excitedly as they walk through the streets.

RONNIE (V.O.)

Without a second thought, I told her everything. The system. Looney. My father. I'd known her all of two hours and she knew more about me than my oldest friends. What can I say? I trusted her.

They continue walking and talking...

EXT. CALLE OCHO (SW 8TH ST.) - CONTINUOUS

...walking and talking...

RITA

I couldn't get used to the structure of the hospital. Thought my father was gonna have a heart attack when I quit, but he took it in stride.

RONNIE

You two close?

Rita nods.

RITA

He's been fighting his whole life. First Hitler. Then Batista.

(MORE)

RITA (cont'd)
Then Castro. Taught me to stand
up for myself and what's mine.

RONNIE
How 'bout your mother?

Rita's demeanor changes, she gets angry.

RITA
When it was time to leave Cuba,
she lost her nerve. Rather die in
the familiar than take a chance
on the unknown. She was a coward.

This resonates with Ronnie.

RONNIE
You weren't scared?

RITA
I got on that boat and never
looked back.

Rita takes Ronnie's hand.

RITA (cont'd)
Anything's possible here, that's
what I love.

Smiling mischievously, Rita pulls him into...

INT. BALL AND CHAIN - CUBAN BAR - CONTINUOUS

...Ronnie and Rita enter the bar, bustling with CUBANS
dancing to a AFRO-CUBAN BAND.

RITA (V.O.)
I read in Mademoiselle, that
everyone has a soulmate, one true
love somewhere out there in the
world. I call bullshit.
Trajectory. What it's all about.

Rita leads Ronnie by the hand through the crowd toward
the bar.

RITA (V.O.) (cont'd)
Linking up with someone on the
same trajectory and feeding off
each other's mojo.

Rita grabs the last two stools at the bar from a less
aggressive COUPLE.

RONNIE (V.O.)
 She exuded confidence. Didn't
 take shit off anybody.

INT. BALL AND CHAIN - CUBAN BAR - LATER

Ronnie and Rita talk and drink Mojitos.

RITA (V.O.)
 He was cute. Told me about
 growing up poor and how his
 brains gave him opportunities
 others in his situation didn't
 have. Different from the guys I
 was used to dating, machismo
 Cubans...

Two MACHISMO CUBAN's, 20's, feathered hair, stare at
 Rita from across the bar.

RITA (V.O.) (cont'd)
 ...who cared more about *their*
 bodies than mine.

INT. BALL AND CHAIN - CUBAN BAR - LATER

A CUBAN man, 60's, takes Rita's hand and the two salsa
 dance.

RONNIE (V.O.)
 Rita was exotic. Before the
 system, I never would've had the
 confidence to land a girl like
 her.

All the men in the bar look at Rita as she dances.

RONNIE (V.O.) (cont'd)
 I was used to women like my
 mother, hardened, cynical, unable
 to trust. Rita was different. Had
 a way of seeing the world. Spun a
 negative into a positive.

Rita, sweat glistening on her bronzed skin, dances up to
 Ronnie, putting her face close to his.

RITA (V.O.)
 Ronnie had a quiet confidence. He
 knew what he wanted and went
 after it. But behind those eyes I
 saw a sadness, a sweet soul.

RITA

I see a sparkle in your eye.

Rita points into his eye.

RITA (cont'd)

Right there, I see it.

Rita takes Ronnie's hand and the two dance. He's terrible.

RITA (V.O.)

He had two left feet, but he had the balls to get out and dance anyway. Life excited him and that excited me. It turned me on.

Rita takes Ronnie's face in her hands and kisses him.

RONNIE (V.O.)

I felt like with her on my arm, I could do anything.

RITA (V.O.)

We never left each other's side again.

INT. MIAMI JAI ALAI - TICKET AREA

SUPER: THE TEAM

Ronnie stands in line impatiently waiting to get his numbers down.

The clock reads: **11:53 p.m.**

RONNIE (V.O.)

The first crucial team member we needed was a ticket puncher ready to place our bets before every match.

Ronnie leans out to look at the front of the line.

RONNIE (V.O.) (cont'd)

There was usually 13-15 minutes to bet between games. If the games ran long, we'd have less time to get our tickets.

An OLD LADY with a walker gets to the front of the line.

RONNIE (V.O.) (cont'd)

We couldn't anticipate everything
and there was no margin for
error.

OLD LADY

Who's your favorite player?

TICKET PUNCHER

Number 6, Joey Cornblit, he's the
best.

PATRON

C'mon! Let's go!

Ronnie looks over at Looney stuck in another long line.
Ronnie puts his hands up: "Fuck!"

OLD LADY

I'll take number six to win.

Old Lady dumps change out of her pocketbook.

A warning bell goes off and a red siren light spins.

RONNIE

C'mon!

The clock on the wall tick, tick, ticks to: **12:00 a.m.**

TICKET PUNCHER

No more bets.

The window closes. Ronnie's furious.

RONNIE (V.O.)

The worst feeling in the world
was getting shut out at the
window and having one of your
numbers come in for a big price.

Ronnie marks his sheet with an "X" over the last match.

INT. MIAMI JAI ALAI - NIGHT

Ronnie, at the front of the line, bets the list.

RONNIE (V.O.)

When we *did* get to the front of the line, it took almost the entire post time to punch out our list. 99% of betters could finish the exercise in a few seconds. Not us.

TICKET PUNCHER goes fast, trying to keep up.

RONNIE

4-3-1, 4-3-2...

TICKET PUNCHER

Slow down please.

Tickets pump out of the machine as the line stacks up.

A big CRAZY CUBAN in a fedora, chewing on a cigar, becomes impatient.

RONNIE

6-5-1, 6-5-2...

CRAZY CUBAN

Coño meng! Hurry the fuck up!

RONNIE (V.O.)

Then the spotlight was on us and our exposure went up.

Patrons in other lines look over at Ronnie, curious about what he's betting.

RONNIE (V.O.)

Our worst nightmare would be someone catching on, getting the list, and betting down our numbers.

Crazy Cuban bites down on his cigar and then moves toward Ronnie...

RONNIE (V.O.)

Betting 150 plus combinations a game, it was almost impossible to blend in.

...grabbing him by the arm.

CRAZY CUBAN

Qué pasando aqui arriba, bro?

TICKET PUNCHER

Sir, please don't touch other patrons.

Ronnie barely manages to grab all his tickets and escape.

RONNIE (V.O.)

We needed a team to lighten the load, spread out, give us an advantage, and keep us from getting killed in the process.

INT. MIAMI JAI ALAI - TICKET AREA - DAY

Ronnie and Looney stand across from the ticket area watching...

LOONEY

John DeWees.

...who we recognize from the open, with long spider hands, sitting behind the window working the keyboard with dexterity, speed, and concentration.

LOONEY (cont'd)

They call him the maestro. Hands like a fucking concert pianist.

Tickets pump out of the machine.

Looney nods towards the window next to John.

LOONEY (cont'd)

That's his wife, Kathy.

Kathy, with a Farrah Fawcett haircut, winks and jokes with an old man who palms her a tip, which she demurely deposits in her ample cleavage.

LOONEY (cont'd)

She has her own talents.

INT. DEUCE BAR - DAY

John and Kathy walk into the bar and shake hands with Looney and Ronnie. The four sit in the corner.

INT. DEUCE BAR - CORNER TABLE - CONTINUOUS

LOONEY

We'll supply you with cash and a list of numbers before every work session and you'll punch our list out for each performance.

INT. MIAMI JAI ALAI - TICKET WINDOW - NIGHT

John finishes punching out the list and places the tickets to the side of his keyboard.

INT. DEUCE BAR - CONTINUOUS

Rita walks into the bar and sits next to Ronnie.

RONNIE

Then Rita will collect the tickets before each match.

INT. MIAMI JAI ALAI - TICKET WINDOW - CONTINUOUS

Rita reaches the front of the line and John slides her the stack of tickets rolled up in a program.

INT. MIAMI JAI ALAI - VIP BOX - MOMENTS LATER

Ronnie and Looney sit in the VIP. Rita enters and hands Ronnie the rolled up program.

LOONEY (O.S.)

I'll separate out the winners from the losers...

Looney throws losing tickets into a brown paper bag and hands Ronnie winners, which he places in his attaché.

INT. DEUCE BAR - CONTINUOUS

KATHY

Why keep the losers?

INT. CALL CENTER - BISCAYNE BOULEVARD - DAY

Ronnie and Looney walk through a bullpen of eager SALES BROKERS - giving loud pitches over the phone in Spanish and English - and head toward the back office where...

LOONEY

Ron, meet our new accountant,
Harold Simon.

...HAROLD SIMON, early 50's, nebbishy with a greenish
toupee, tracheotomy hole in his throat, chain-smokes and
crunches numbers on his Imperial Office Master.

HAROLD

(through "trach"
speaking device)

Nice to meet you, young man.

RONNIE (V.O.)

Harold Simon was an ex-IRS
investigator who was wasting his
talents cooking the books for an
Opa-Locka call center selling
parcels of Everglades swampland
to Mid-western retirees.

INT. HAROLD'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Ronnie and Looney sit across from Harold.

HAROLD

The profession we'll put down on
your tax return is "Probability
Analyst." Save all the losing
tickets to prove your losses and
you'll only be taxed on net
winnings.

RONNIE (V.O.)

If I learned anything in law
school...

INT. DEUCE BAR - CONTINUOUS

Ronnie looks Kathy in the eye.

RONNIE

...don't fuck with the I.R.S.

Looney slides the envelope of cash across the table to
John, who hands the envelope to Kathy.

RONNIE (cont'd)

We'll cash out the winning tickets either at the end of the night or the next morning, depending on the size of the winnings.

LOONEY

We're looking to hire security.

JOHN

I got a couple guys. Real muscle. Trustworthy.

INT. 5TH STREET BOXING GYM - SOUTH BEACH - DAY

John and Looney walk in.

Towering identical twin brothers, VINNY and CHRIS DELUCA, 20's, work out. Vinny holds the heavy bag while Chris pounds it.

BANG. BANG. BANG.

Looney smiles.

LOONEY

They'll do.

INT. MIAMI JAI ALAI - TICKET WINDOW - EARLY MORNING

Ronnie, attaché under his arm, approaches the ticket window - no line - opens the case and slides out a stack of winners.

RONNIE

Morning, Maureen.

MAUREEN

Mornin' sugar.

RONNIE (V.O.)

Once we were set up properly and everyone knew their job, things really started to flow.

Maureen stacks \$30,000 in cash on the counter. Ronnie puts the cash in his case and walks out.

I/E. MIAMI JAI ALAI - CONTINUOUS

Ronnie exits the building where the DeLuca brothers, in matching velour warm-up suits, wait patiently. Ronnie nods at them and they follow him to his car.

RONNIE (V.O.)

Cash came in so quickly we barely had time to get it into the bank.

Ronnie opens the trunk and puts cash into a cardboard box filled with stacks of hundreds.

RONNIE (V.O.) (cont'd)

At the end of each week I set money aside for the following week's bets, paid the team, and split the balance with Looney.

INT. CALL CENTER - HAROLD'S OFFICE - DAY

Ronnie and Looney walk into Harold's office and deposit a box of loser tickets and a bag of cash on his desk.

RONNIE (V.O.)

We took care of Uncle Sam.

EXT. ALFIE'S NEWSSTAND - DAY

Ronnie pulls up to the front of the newsstand.

RONNIE (V.O.)

And I used the majority of my profits to pay off Alfie.

INT. RASCAL HOUSE - MIAMI BEACH

Ronnie sits across the table from Rose. Two half-eaten sandwiches between them.

ROSE

Shoulda' split one.

Rose opens a leather cigarette purse, takes out a long Pall Mall, lights it and takes a deep drag.

Ronnie slides a Tiffany box across the table.

ROSE (cont'd)

What's this?

RONNIE

You don't have to worry about
Alfie anymore.

Rose pushes the gift back.

ROSE

What'd you do?

RONNIE

I figured something out.

ROSE

Making that kinda money?

RONNIE

Relax, it's 100 percent above-
board.

ROSE

You can't be that naive and I
know you're not stupid.

Rose takes another drag.

ROSE (cont'd)

Talk.

RONNIE

I came up with a system to beat
the new Trifecta bet in jai alai.

Rose pauses for a moment before cracking up.

ROSE

Are you out of your fucking mind?

RONNIE

I'm minting money.

ROSE

Gambling?! We know how that story
ends.

RONNIE

Mom, it's not gambling.

ROSE

What is it then? What about the
firm? Ben pulled a lot of
strings...

RONNIE

Are you hearing me? I'm making
money hand over fist. The debt's
almost paid off and then some.
As soon as you're in the clear,
I'm back to the bar exam.

(holding up three
fingers)

Scouts honor.

Rose take a beat to digest the news.

ROSE

You never were much of a scout.

RONNIE

It's easy money.

ROSE

There's no-easy-deal.

RONNIE

We have no choice.

Rose mashes out her cigarette.

I/E. PLAZA APARTMENTS - DAY

Ronnie and Rita carry moving boxes into an empty rental
apartment.

RONNIE (V.O.)

Life fell into a comfortable
flow.

INT. PLAZA APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ronnie and Rita have hot, sweaty sex. It's passionate
and raw.

EXT. BYRON-CARLYLE MOVIE THEATER - EVENING

Ronnie and Rita walk out of a screening of *Easy Rider*
hand in hand.

INT. MIAMI JAI ALAI - VIP BOX - EVENING

Ronnie and Rita sit side by side. He whispers in her ear
and she laughs.

Looney sits behind them, annoyed.

Ronnie hands her tickets with red crosses through the numbers.

Rita puts the tickets in a bag and stores it under her seat. She looks back and smiles at Looney.

Looney gets up and walks out.

RONNIE (V.O.)
Everyone loved Rita.

INT. MIAMI JAI ALAI - VIP COCKTAIL LOUNGE - CONTINUOUS

Ronnie, Rita and FRIENDS party in the VIP lounge.

RONNIE (V.O.)
She had style, panache. Wherever
we went, she made us look good.

Rita holds up an empty champagne glass, Terry runs over and fills it. Rita smiles widely at him.

RITA (V.O.)
Ronnie trusted me and I him.

INT. MIAMI JAI ALAI - VIP BOX - NIGHT

Rita looks over at Looney, sitting in the corner snorting cocaine from his bullet.

RITA (V.O.)
But his partner Looney, I knew
the type. Worked with them in the
nightclubs my whole life. What my
abuelita would call; indigno de
confianza. Untrustworthy.

Looney and Rita make eye contact. Looney stands up and walks out.

RITA (V.O.) (cont'd)
They were so different, but
Ronnie looked up to Looney, saw
him like an older brother.

They win and Ronnie marks a "W" on his sheet.

RITA (V.O.) (cont'd)
Looney knew it, too. Took full
fuckin' advantage.

Rita puts her arms around Ronnie and kisses him.

RITA (V.O.) (cont'd)
Messing with my trajectory. Our
trajectory.

EXT. 5TH STREET MARINA - AFTERNOON

Ronnie walks up to a 58ft Hatteras motor yacht - "SEAS
THE DAY" - holding a canvas bag.

I/E. SEAS THE DAY - CONTINUOUS

Alfie plays gin with a few other GUYS on deck. A BROAD
in a bikini serves them drinks.

Ronnie lowers the bag on deck from the dock.

RONNIE
It's all here. Every last dime.

ALFIE
The kid comes through. Things
must be pretty good in the square
world?

RONNIE
We straight?

ALFIE
Hop aboard. I'm not gonna bite.

Ronnie reluctantly jumps on board.

ALFIE (cont'd)
I'm proud of you, kid. You said
you'd take care of it, and you
did. You found a way. That shows
alotta character. Two months
early too. Cut into my fuckin'
vig, this kid.

Guys chuckle.

ALFIE (cont'd)
Cost me ten K, but chapeau.

RONNIE
I did what I had to.

ALFIE

Your father spent years trying to figure out a way to beat the system, and now you have.

Alfie winks. Ronnie's shocked that he knows.

ALFIE (cont'd)

You thought I wouldn't hear? I know about every piece of lucre gambled in this town.

(beat)

Be careful, you chum those waters, the sharks start to circle.

RONNIE

You threatening me?

ALFIE

Hey! I don't want any of that. That's not my business model. That's your money. You want to bet jai alai, go ahead. You wanna go back to the square world, I support you. Whatever you want.

He taps the bag.

ALFIE (cont'd)

I'm whole again. Our business is done. I'm just concerned for your wellbeing's all. That much cash can be corrosive. Don't want you going down the wrong path.

RONNIE

I'm going back to the law firm. Taking the bar next month and becoming a lawyer.

ALFIE

Yeah. Sure. Whatever. I'm happy for you either way, boychick. Good luck.

Alfie sticks out his hand.

ALFIE (cont'd)

It was business, never personal.

Ronnie shakes Alfie's hand.

Ronnie disembarks and walks down the dock.

INT. VOLKSWAGEN BEETLE - LATER

Ronnie's parked in front of the law firm looking up at the building.

RONNIE (V.O.)
 Alfie had me pegged. He knew exactly who I was. I couldn't go back to sitting in an office all day. Fuck that.

Ronnie turns the key in the ignition and reverses.

RONNIE (V.O.) (cont'd)
 Now that Alfie was paid in full, I could reinvest every dime into the system, make as much money as humanly possible...

Putting the car in first, Ronnie revs the engine. The sound gets louder and louder until it's a...

...Corvette engine - VRMMMMMM. He pops the clutch and speeds off...

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. MIAMI JAI ALAI - VALET STAND - NIGHT

Ronnie and Rita speed up to the valet stand in a brand new Corvette Stingray, black with tan interior.

RONNIE (V.O.)
 ...and finally start enjoying the fruits of my labor.

Ronnie hops out, throws the keys to the Valet, and grabs Rita's hand spinning her around with elegance.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. MUTINY BAR - CHRISTMAS NIGHT

Ronnie in his tuxedo spins Rita in her green sequined dress. The lovers kiss and dance as the -- CAMERA TRACKS -- around them.

RONNIE (V.O.)

The 1975 season was in the rear-view mirror. The team was a well-oiled machine, armed with cash and every shortcut to maximize the system.

Ronnie pulls a diamond bracelet out of his pocket and hands it to Rita.

RITA (V.O.)

Ronnie and I were in love. I could see spending the rest of my life with him.

Twisting her wrist, the bracelet sparkles in the club lights like a disco ball.

RONNIE (V.O.)

I did what my father could never do. I was becoming my own man.

Ronnie dances, carefree.

INT. MUTINY BAR - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Looney walks out of the bathroom, wiping cocaine remnants from his nose.

Walking over to a house phone, Looney picks up the receiver and dials, stressed.

LOONEY

(into the phone)

It's Harmen.

(beat, listening)

Let it ride.

(beat)

I know what I owe. I'm feelin' lucky.

Looney grabs a champagne from a passing Slutty Santa and chugs it.

Latin Band performs and the drummer bangs his congas. The energy reaches a frenzy.

INT. PALM BEACH JAI ALAI - NIGHT

NOTE: The music continues to play over the entire sequence.

A lit match flips end over end and lands in a puddle of gasoline.

The Palm Beach fronton goes up in a blaze.

INT. MUTINY BAR - CONTINUOUS

Drummer bangs his congas.

EXT. PALM BEACH JAI ALAI - NEXT MORNING

FBI AGENTS pull up to the burned-out remains of the fronton.

RONNIE (V.O.)

In the 40 some-odd years since Florida legalized betting in the sport of jai alai, there wasn't a peep. Not a murmur. Not an infraction. Nothing. But when a coupla greedy owners in Palm Beach burned their fronton to the ground for insurance money...

EXT. PALM BEACH JAI ALAI - DAY

FBI Agents open metal file cabinets, pulled from underneath the rubble, and recover untouched files.

RONNIE (V.O.)

...the FBI recovered certain files showing irregularities regarding betting and tax records. The heat came and it came fast.

INT. MUTINY BAR - CONTINUOUS

Drummer bangs his congas.

INT. FLORIDA STATE ATTORNEY'S OFFICE - MIAMI - DAY

JANET RENO, 40, behind a huge desk, opens a file folder, smells the smokey pages, and reads them.

JANET RENO

Open an investigation.

TWO AGENTS who recovered the files smile.

RONNIE (V.O.)

The newly appointed Florida State Attorney, Janet Reno, hot to prove she had the biggest dick in law enforcement, got a major hard-on for the our little sport.

JANET RENO

Find out if this is systemic.

RONNIE (V.O.)

And we had no fuckin' idea.

INT. MUTINY BAR - CONTINUOUS

Drummer crescendos. Ronnie dips Rita.

The dance floor goes BLACK.

FADE IN:

SUPER: 3 MONTHS LATER

EXT. HARTFORD COUNTRY CLUB - DAY

A beautiful, sunny day on the golf course. Trees sway in the breeze. Swans swim in the lake. Fountains spurt water. MEMBERS make and miss putts.

SUPER: HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT - 1976

EXT. HARTFORD COUNTRY CLUB - PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

HARVEY ZISKIS, 32, in country club clothes, sits on the bumper of his beat-up Chevy Monte Carlo, trunk ajar. Taking off his golf spikes, he bangs out the dirt, counts out \$750 in cash, and slips it into his pocket. Putting on flip flops, he gets up and slams the trunk.

Three pissed-off MEMBERS, 40's, fraternity-type WASPs in pastel golf outfits, stand in front of his car, accompanied by TWO CADDIES in white coveralls.

MEMBER 1

Friends of the club president,
huh, Jewboy?

Ziskis beelines for his door and opens it. One of the caddies kicks the door shut.

MEMBER 2

We ran into Cap and he never heard of a Harvey Ziskis.

ZISKIS

Best nine I ever played, swear. Lucky shots all.

Ziskis pulls the cash out of his pocket.

ZISKIS (cont'd)

Here, take it.

MEMBER 3

Too late for that.

The Country Clubbers jump Ziskis and wail on him.

WHACK. WHACK. WHACK.

EXT. HARTFORD COUNTRY CLUB - PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

They slam his head into the Monte Carlo door.

BANG.

EXT. HARTFORD COUNTRY CLUB - PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

Ziskis, bloodied, leans against his front tire. Member 2 throws the cash in his face.

MEMBER 2

We got our money's worth.

Member 2 spits on Harvey.

MEMBER 3

Better not see your kike ass around here again.

They walk away. The Members hi-five.

Ziskis jams the bill in his nose to stop the bleeding.

EXT. HARTFORD COUNTRY CLUB - PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

Harvey crawls into his car, and reverses out. His rusted axle squeaks as he peels off.

EXT. HARVEY'S STUDIO APARTMENT - LATER

Ziskis limps into his dark, messy apartment, still bloody, clutching his ribs. His cat walks over and scratches at his leg.

Ziskis kicks the cat. RAWR!

He opens the freezer, grabs a bottle of cheap Vodka, swigs it and puts the bottle to his black eye.

A framed picture of Ziskis, his WIFE and BABY GIRL, all smiles, sits on the bookshelf.

Based on the appearance of the apartment they're not living there. Another photo of Ziskis with his PLATOON in Vietnam.

Ziskis clicks on the TV and slowly sinks into the couch, wincing in pain.

A commercial announcing the grand opening of the Hartford fronton appears.

Ziskis takes out the cash with traces of blood, folds it and stuffs it under the couch cushion.

He watches the commercial intently, wheels spinning.

EXT. HARTFORD HOLIDAY INN - DAY

Looney stands in front of the hotel and snorts a bump of cocaine in each nostril from a bullet.

RONNIE (V.O.)

Once Miami Jai Alai closed for the season, Hartford Jai Alai was the place to be. Now we could spend winters in Miami and summers in Hartford at the two biggest frontons in America.

Ronnie and Rita pull into the parking lot in Ronnie's Corvette Stingray. The front grill and windshield are plastered with dead bugs.

They climb out and stretch.

Looney walks over.

LOONEY

Took you long enough. Bored to tears up here.

Looney motions toward the hotel.

LOONEY (cont'd)
Our summer palace.

RITA
Classy.

LOONEY
Best in town, your highness.

RONNIE
How're the crowds?

LOONEY
The handle's large, last Friday
and Saturday it hit a million.
Aside from that, there ain't shit
to do.

RITA
I need a hot shower.

They head into the hotel.

INT. HARTFORD JAI ALAI - CONCESSION - NIGHT

Ronnie, Rita and Looney walk into the fronton and
approach the concession stand.

Harvey Ziskis - still bruised from his beating - emerges
from behind the counter and wipes it down.

LOONEY
Two dogs...

RITA
...and a Coke.

Ziskis looks to Ronnie, who shakes his head.

Ziskis prepares the dogs.

LOONEY
Kathy and John arrive today. I
got a designated ticket window
just for us. Had to tip this
ball-breaking security asshole,
but...

Ronnie eyes Ziskis eavesdropping as he pours the Coke.

LOONEY (cont'd)
...I got the usual detail with a
special door to the parking lot.
Typically...

Ronnie puts his hand on Looney's shoulder.

RONNIE
Not here.

Ziskis slides the Coke to Rita and Looney notices a
U.S.M.C. (United States Marine Corp) tattoo on his
forearm.

LOONEY
What regiment?

ZISKIS
Ninth Marine, Third Division,
infantry.

LOONEY
Hamburger Hill?

ZISKIS
Till the bitter end.

Ronnie and Rita take in Ziskis' black eye, swollen lip
and scabby face.

RONNIE
What happened?

ZISKIS
A few conscientious objectors.
Had to teach 'em a lesson.

LOONEY
Cowards.

Ziskis gives Rita the creeps. She walks away.

ZISKIS
I love me a Latin ass.

RONNIE
Hey, asshole!

LOONEY
Ronnie, chill. No hard feelings.

Ronnie walks off.

Looney pulls out a wad of cash. Peeling a hundred dollar bill off the top...

LOONEY (cont'd)

Here.

...he hands it to Ziskis, who clocks the wad.

LOONEY (cont'd)

Keep it.

Looney grabs his dogs and walks after Ronnie. Ziskis follows Looney with with his eyes, slips the hundred into his pocket, and smiles.

ZISKIS

See you 'round.

INT. HARTFORD JAI ALAI - TICKET WINDOW - NIGHT

John and Kathy punch out numbers. Tickets pump out of the machine one after the other.

RONNIE (V.O.)

Looney arranged all the same amenities we had in Miami.

Chris and Vinny DeLuca stand in line waiting to get their tickets punched.

RONNIE (V.O.) (cont'd)

The entire traveling circus came to town, including the players.

INT. PLAYER'S LOUNGE - HARTFORD - DAY

PLAYERS arrive, greeting each other.

RONNIE (V.O.)

I mean, where else were they gonna go, Spain?

INT. HARTFORD JAI ALAI - VIP BOX - CONTINUOUS

Ronnie marks down "W" after "W" on his win sheet.

RONNIE (V.O.)

The trifecta cost \$3 per bet in Hartford, unlike the \$2 bet in Miami.

(MORE)

RONNIE (V.O.) (cont'd)

I was betting \$1,350 - or 450
tickets per game - just over 16K
a night.

John DeWees' fingers fly across the keyboard. Tickets pour out of the machine. DeLuca Brothers walk into the box and hand Ronnie the stack of 450 tickets.

Ronnie nods to a brown paper bag on the floor.

Vinny grabs the bag and walks out.

INT. HARTFORD JAI ALAI - CONCESSION - NIGHT

Ziskis cleans the counter, locks the register, and looks back at a HIGH SCHOOL AGE EMPLOYEE mopping.

ZISKIS

Register's closed out for the
night. I'm gonna go take a spin.

Employee nods without looking up.

INT. HARTFORD JAI ALAI - TICKET AREA - CONTINUOUS

DeLuca Brothers walk the losers over to John's window. John puts them in a shopping bag.

RONNIE (V.O.)

The payoffs were so high on the
easy numbers that we were
breaking even on the list by the
seventh or eighth game.

INT. HARTFORD JAI ALAI - CONTINUOUS

Ziskis walks around the fronton. Two guys get up from a table leaving half-finished beers. Ziskis picks one up, sips it and keeps walking.

INT. HARTFORD JAI ALAI - VIP BOX - CONTINUOUS

Ronnie and Rita watch a match in progress.

RONNIE (V.O.)

Whatever hit after that was pure
profit. It was like taking candy
from a baby.

A COCKTAIL WAITRESS brings a bottle of Dom...

RONNIE (V.O.) (cont'd)

We couldn't find a decent champagne in Hartford, so I had cases of Dom shipped in from France.

...and POPS the top. Everyone raises their glasses, cheering.

INT. HARTFORD JAI ALAI - AUDITORIUM - CONTINUOUS

Ziskis looks up at the VIP box. Watching the champagne toast, he looks down at his warm beer, dumps the remainder in a nearby plant, and walks off.

INT. HARTFORD JAI ALAI - VIP BOX - CONTINUOUS

Ronnie and Rita are all smiles.

CLICK. Freeze-Frame. CLICK. Freeze-Frame.

A FEDERAL AGENT with a long lens photographs them from across the auditorium.

INT. HARTFORD NATIONAL BANK - VAULT - AFTER HOURS

Ronnie and Rita open safety deposit boxes and stuff them with cash.

RONNIE (V.O.)

I was filling safety deposit boxes with stacks of cash all over the Hartford countryside.

Ronnie slips the bank manager a couple hundreds.

EXT. HARTFORD NATIONAL BANK - PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

Ronnie and Rita walk out of the bank. It's late and the parking lot is empty.

Ronnie stops and looks over his shoulder.

CLICK. Freeze-Frame. CLICK. Freeze-Frame.

EXT. HARTFORD NATIONAL BANK - PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Ronnie pulls out and speeds off.

CLICK. Freeze-Frame. CLICK. Freeze-Frame.

Feds take photos of Ronnie's license plate.

EXT. EAST HARTFORD HOLIDAY INN - POOL AREA - DAY

Rita sits on Ronnie's lap, relaxing at a Sunday BBQ, surrounded by jai alai PLAYERS and their WIVES.

John, Kathy, and the DeLuca Brothers mingle.

RITA (V.O)

When we weren't at the fronton,
we were hanging with players and
their wives.

A Player's KID walks over and tugs on his MOTHER's arm.
Rita leans down to talk to him.

RITA

Cariño, ve a jugar y deja que
mami y Tía Rita hablen.

RONNIE (V.O.)

Rita loved it because all the
players wives were Latin and she
could speak Spanish.

Looney sits next to them, bored. He checks his watch.

A KID runs up to Looney and sprays him with a water
pistol right in the face.

Looney wipes his face, not amused.

LOONEY

Perfect.

Ronnie and Rita chuckle.

Ziskis walks into the BBQ. Looney jumps up to greet him.

Ronnie and Rita watch Looney walk towards Ziskis.

Looney motions for Ziskis to join the party.

Ronnie and Rita stay seated in their chair as...

EXT. EAST HARTFORD HOLIDAY INN - POOL AREA - CONTINUOUS

... TIME LAPSE -- The BBQ continues through three
seasons.

Everyone goes from summer to winter clothes as the leaves turn from green to orange and yellow and then fall off the trees.

The BBQ party never stops...

RONNIE (V.O.)

Right when Rita warmed up to Hartford, it got cold.

Rita, in a thick fur coat, watches Looney and Ziskis talk quietly to a Player, DOMINGO, 20's, tall, lanky.

Looney removes a glove from his hand, takes a bump from his bullet and passes it to Ziskis.

RITA (V.O.)

Ronnie thought over time winning might change Looney, but you can't change who you are.

Rita nudges Ronnie and motions her head towards Looney and Ziskis.

Ronnie takes note.

INT. HARTFORD JAI ALAI - VIP BOX - NIGHT

Ronnie stands in his box, staring out at the court, the king in his kingdom.

Looney and Ziskis rail cocaine with RANDOM GIRLS.

Ziskis watches Ronnie take out his list and mark "W."

Rita enters the VIP with a bag of win tickets and slides it behind a seat in the corner.

Ziskis' eyes follow Rita's ass as she sits. Ziskis looks over at Ronnie who stares right at him. The two lock eyes, Ziskis grins.

Ronnie turns back to the match and slips his list into his pocket.

Rita looks back over her shoulder at Ziskis who blows her a kiss.

INT. STAR DINER - LATE NIGHT

Ronnie and Rita sit over plates of half eaten eggs. A WAITRESS fills their coffee cups.

RITA

You ever have that chat with
Looney?

RONNIE

Chat?

Rita shakes her head "you know what I'm talking about."

RITA

I don't get it. He's done nothing
but snort blow and hang out with
that lowlife, Ziskis, since we
got here. You do all the work.

RONNIE

This was his idea. Without him...

RITA

..Please, he couldn't accomplish
anything without you. He's
nothing but an albatross around
your neck.

Ronnie flags the waitress for a check.

RITA (cont'd)

Why don't you say something?
What're you scared of?

RONNIE

I'm not scared. He's always had
my back. When we were kids...

(Ronnie shakes his
head, remembering)

I owe him.

RITA

I left my home and everything I
know to follow you here. Not
Looney.

RONNIE

(angry)

You don't know him.

Rita looks up, hurt by his tone.

RITA

Maybe I don't know you? I didn't
sign up for this. You don't owe
him shit and the faster you break
away from him, the better off
you'll be.

Rita storms off.

INT. HARTFORD JAI ALAI - VIP BOX - DAY

Ronnie and Rita watch a match in tense silence.

Domingo, who we recognize from the the BBQ, gets up to serve. Standing at the service line, he glances over his shoulder.

Ronnie follows his gaze to Looney and Ziskis, standing behind the player's bench. He watches them exchange a nod.

Domingo under-serves the point.

The other PLAYER reacts, getting in Domingo's face. They begin to fight.

The large CROWD jumps up and gasps.

SECURITY runs onto the court and breaks up the fight.

Ronnie watches Looney and Ziskis walk up the aisle.

Ronnie hands Rita the car keys.

RONNIE

Go back to the hotel, I gotta talk to Looney.

Nodding to DeLuca Brothers.

RONNIE (cont'd)

Come with me.

INT. HARTFORD JAI ALAI - TICKET AREA - CONTINUOUS

Ronnie, flanked by DeLuca Brothers, intercepts Ziskis and Looney.

RONNIE

The fuck's the matter with you?

LOONEY

What?!

RONNIE

You think I'm blind. If the guys upstairs find out you're fixing games, we're done. Blacklisted.

ZISKIS

Dumb spic can't follow simple instructions. Next time...

RONNIE

You hearing me, there is no next time. Go back to the snack bar, you're out of your league.

ZISKIS

Go fuck yourself.

Ronnie lunges for Ziskis.

EXT. HARTFORD JAI ALAI - PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Snow comes down as Rita walks out to Ronnie's car sitting all alone in the parking lot.

Pulling her collar up around her neck to shield her from the icy wind, Rita reaches the car and tries to open the door. The handle and lock are frozen shut.

INT. HARTFORD JAI ALAI - CONTINUOUS

Looney and DeLuca Brothers break up Ronnie and Ziskis.

LOONEY

We got something going here that don't involve you.

EXT. HARTFORD JAI ALAI - PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

A Lincoln town car pulls up behind Rita. Its tires crackle on the black ice-covered asphalt.

Rita turns around.

the passenger side window lowers, revealing TWO GOONS wearing black leather jackets and tinted glasses.

PASSENGER

Coffee.

RITA

Excuse me?

PASSENGER

Hot coffee will melt through the ice. You're lock's frozen.

(MORE)

PASSENGER (cont'd)
 Being a Floridian, you wouldn't
 know that.

Rita's spooked.

RITA
 How you know I'm from Florida?

Passenger motions to the back of the car.

PASSENGER
 Plates.

Rita smiles and nods.

PASSENGER (cont'd)
 It's your lucky day.

Passenger gets out of the car with a steel coffee
 thermos dangling from his finger.

INT. HARTFORD JAI ALAI - CONTINUOUS

Looney's in Ronnie's face.

RONNIE
 You know betting the players
 doesn't work.

LOONEY
 You're not the always the
 smartest guy in the room. I know
 things too! I'm smart, too.

RONNIE
 Real smart. You're gonna fuck up
 the greatest deal in the history
 of deals.

ZISKIS
 You don't have to listen to this
 draft dodgin' piece of shit.

Ronnie's hurt. Then his hurt turns to rage.

RONNIE
 That's how you wanna play this?
 Good, listen to your new partner.
 You're out!

Ronnie walks off with DeLuca Brothers.

ZISKIS

Come on, man. Fuck him.

Looney knows he fucked up.

EXT. HARTFORD JAI ALAI - PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Passenger approaches Rita, unscrewing the thermos and pours steaming hot coffee on the Corvette handle and lock, melting the ice.

PASSENGER

Now try.

Rita inserts the key into the lock and turns. CLICK. The lock knob pops up.

PASSENGER (cont'd)

Works every time.

Rita turns to thank him and BAM!

The metal thermos cracks Rita across the face. She falls to the asphalt. Her nose gushes blood.

PASSENGER

Tell your boyfriend his partner
David owes us money, and
someone's gotta pay or you're all
dead.

Passenger kicks Rita in the gut, gets in the car and drives off.

Rita passes out on the ice.

INT. HARTFORD HOSPITAL - LATER

Ronnie runs down the hallway.

INT. HARTFORD HOSPITAL - LATER

Ronnie stands in the doorway of Rita's room, talking to the DOCTOR.

DOCTOR

She's lucky. Aside from a broken
nose, and some bruised ribs,
she'll be fine.

RONNIE

She's tough.

DOCTOR

A few more minutes out there and she could've suffered hypothermia, which can be especially dangerous in her condition.

Ronnie looks at Doctor.

RONNIE

Condition?

INT. HARTFORD HOSPITAL - LATER

Ronnie lays in the hospital bed next to Rita, spooning her. He gently lays his hand on her stomach and weeps.

INT. HARTFORD HOSPITAL - EARLY MORNING

Ronnie sits in the waiting room sipping coffee. Looney walks in.

LOONEY

Please tell me she's okay?

RONNIE

Who the fuck were those guys?

Looney doesn't want to say.

RONNIE (cont'd)

Then get outta here.

LOONEY

Boston mob. Ziskis' relationship.

RONNIE

How much?

Looney hesitates.

LOONEY

One point five.

Ronnie, beaten down, puts his head in his hands.

RONNIE

Jesus, Looney.

LOONEY

Ziskis told 'em you got money.
He's been around, he knows.

RONNIE

What's he know? He doesn't know
shit. He's an idiot. Do they have
the system?

LOONEY

I didn't tell him anything. I
swear Ronnie, I swear to God.

RONNIE

Why? Why gamble when the system
works?

Looney doesn't answer.

RONNIE (V.O.)

Turns out, the more we won, the
more Looney bet. I don't know if
it was Vietnam that undid him or
his mentality since we were kids
diving head first into second
base, but Rita was right. I
should've seen it. I fuckin' grew
up with it.

Looney puts his head in his hands.

LOONEY

I was sure I could make it up on
the side without coming to you.
I'm sorry, man.

Ronnie stands and walks out.

INT. HARTFORD NATIONAL BANK - MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT

Ronnie unloads safety deposit boxes. A bank MANAGER
stands there in a robe half asleep.

RONNIE (V.O.)

I needed to make one million on
top of the 500k I had in the
bank...

EXT. HARTFORD NATIONAL BANK - MOMENTS LATER

Rita sits in the passenger seat, bruised, waiting while
Ronnie loads the suitcases of cash into the trunk.

RONNIE (V.O.)
 ...plus the five percent vig - an
 extra 75k - that's after tax
 dollars.

Shutting the trunk, Ronnie circles to the driver's side
 and gets in.

Speeding out, they head south toward Miami.

INT. RASCAL HOUSE - MORNING - DAY

Ronnie sits in the booth crunching numbers.

RONNIE (V.O.)
 That means, I'd have to average
 15k a night, six days a week for
 three straight months...

Circling 90k x 12 weeks, he throws down the pen down.

RONNIE
 Fuuuck!

RONNIE (V.O.)
 ...which would get me out of the
 hole just in time for the baby.

EXT. RASCAL HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Ronnie exits the restaurant and heads to his Corvette. A
 black Lincoln town car idles a block away.

RONNIE (V.O.)
 All this while looking over my
 shoulder.

The door to the Lincoln opens. Ronnie rushes to put his
 key in the door...

An OLD WOMEN gets out of the Lincoln and heads toward
 the restaurant.

Ronnie quickly jumps in his Corvette and speeds off.

INT. MIAMI JAI ALAI - NIGHT

A group of GRANDMAS sit in the stands.

RONNIE (V.O.)

Keep in mind, the system works over time. Some days are better than others. If some grandma comes in on an afternoon, bets her birthday and hits, that dilutes the pot.

Grandmas win big and cheer.

INT. MIAMI JAI ALAI - VIP - CONTINUOUS

Standing in his old spot in the Miami VIP room, Ronnie marks "W" next to numbers on his list.

RONNIE (V.O.)

I used the 500k to continue to pay the team and work the system.

INT. MIAMI JAI ALAI - TICKET WINDOW - DAY

Ronnie stands at the ticket window, watching the tickets pop out of the machine as John DeWees punches in his list.

INT. MIAMI JAI ALAI - CASHIER - NIGHT

Ronnie cashes win tickets with Maureen. She slides him cash.

DeLuca Brothers stand behind Ronnie, looking around.

RONNIE (V.O.)

I felt good about my plan.

I/E. RITA'S HOUSE - LITTLE HAVANA - LATE NIGHT

Ronnie's Corvette pulls up to the curb.

Rita's father looks through the blinds, paranoid.

He answers the door in his robe holding a bolt action army rifle. He nods to Ronnie, who hops out of his Corvette and rushes into the house.

INT. RITA'S HOUSE - LITTLE HAVANA - CONTINUOUS

Rita sleeps on the couch, Ronnie covers her with a blanket, and kisses her on the forehead.

RONNIE (V.O.)
I couldn't afford any hiccups.

INT. MIAMI JAI ALAI - CONCESSION - AFTERNOON

Ronnie stands at the counter, exhausted.

RONNIE
Cup of coffee, black.

John DeWees approaches.

DEWEES
Ziskis's here betting a list.

INT. MIAMI JAI ALAI - TICKET WINDOW - MOMENTS LATER

Ronnie stands in the corner watching Harvey Ziskis hold up the line, buying his long list of numbers as patrons yell at him for the delay.

RONNIE (V.O.)
I don't know if Looney showed Ziskis more than he should've or if he picked up some of our combinations from hanging around.

INT. MIAMI JAI ALAI - AUDITORIUM - MOMENTS LATER

Ronnie watches Ziskis from across the auditorium. A PLAYER wins the point and Ziskis jumps up, excited.

RONNIE (V.O.)
I didn't care. He was making a scene and betting down my numbers. He had to go.

INT. MIAMI JAI ALAI - CASHIER - DAY

Ziskis slides his winning tickets to Maureen.

ZISKIS
I could get used to this.

Maureen smiles dryly and counts his money out.

MAUREEN
Here, let me give you a bag for all your winnings.

Maureen reaches under the counter, grabs a brown paper bag and slips in his cash.

Ziskis takes the bag, slides a five across the counter.

ZISKIS

Get yourself a drink on me.

MAUREEN

You're too kind.

Ziskis walks towards the front door.

Two SECURITY GUARDS approach.

SECURITY GUARD 1

I'm gonna need to search your bag.

ZISKIS

What's the problem? I won this fair and square.

SECURITY GUARD 2

Then you should have nothing to worry about.

Ziskis reluctantly hands over the bag. Security Guard 1 thumbs through Ziskis' winnings. He finds a cashed win ticket.

SECURITY GUARD 1

What's this?

Ziskis looks confused.

ZISKIS

That's a mistake. An oversight, she must've...

He looks over at Maureen's window. A different CASHIER occupies her booth.

SECURITY GUARD 2

Please follow us, sir.

Ronnie stands across the room watching Security grab Ziskis by the arm and usher him away.

RONNIE (V.O.)

Trying to re-cash a win ticket, big no no, illegal and could get you banned for life.

INT. MIAMI JAI ALAI - UPSTAIRS OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Ziskis sits in front of a MANAGER pleading his case.

RONNIE (V.O.)

Ziskis was banned for one year.

ZISKIS

I'll tell you one thing, you
throw me outta here, I'm gonna
blow the lid off this place!

Ziskis stands up writhing, his chair falls back.

RONNIE (V.O.)

I heard he didn't take it so
well.

I/E. MIAMI JAI ALAI - MOMENT LATER

Ziskis, in a choke hold, is thrown out of the fronton.

RONNIE (V.O.)

With Ziskis out of the picture, I
could get back to work.

EXT. MIAMI JAI ALAI - PARKING LOT - EVENING

Ronnie walks through the parking lot, flanked by DeLuca Brothers. A black Lincoln town car with limo-tinted windows pulls up and drives beside him, slowly.

Ronnie stops dead. DeLuca Brothers pull out 9mm pistols and RACK the slides.

The car stops. DeLuca Brothers train their guns on the vehicle. The front door opens and Ronnie watches, anxiously, anticipating a mobster. Instead AGENT PARKER, 40's, emerges in a cheap gray suit and flashes his badge.

AGENT PARKER

Special agent Parker, FBI.
Expecting somebody else?

INT. FBI OFFICES - INTERROGATION ROOM - LATER

Ronnie sits in front of Agent Parker and his partner, AGENT STEVENS, 50's, grizzled.

AGENT PARKER

We know that you and your partner've been betting lists...

RONNIE

Not illegal.

AGENT PARKER

...making a fortune...

RONNIE

Just living the American Dream.

AGENT STEVENS

And you expect us to believe it's all above board?

AGENT PARKER

Who you workin' for?

RONNIE

Myself.

AGENT STEVENS

You a stand in? Who's bankrolling your operation?

RONNIE

Happy to put you in contact with my accountant, I have nothing to hide.

Agent Stevens opens a file and slides several surveillance photos across the table.

AGENT STEVENS

You sure about that, tough guy?

Ronnie's eyes moves back and forth over photos of his life over the last few months:

Rita getting jumped in the parking lot.

Looney and Ziskis talking to the Boston Guys.

Ronnie and Ziskis fighting at Hartford fronton.

AGENT PARKER

You keep pretty rough company for such straight shooters.

AGENT STEVENS

Winter Hill gang don't fuck around. These guys fix horse races, ship guns to the IRA...

AGENT PARKER

...Whaddaya think they do to guys with over a million in outstanding debts?

Ronnie looks up coolly.

RONNIE

I've had a long night. As much as I appreciate the education, I've done nothing illegal. Charge me or let me go.

AGENT STEVENS

We have testimony from Domingo Santiago that he received money from your partners, Harmen and Ziskis, to tank games.

RONNIE

Harvey Ziskis isn't my partner, I hardly know the guy.

AGENT PARKER

Well, he sure seems to know you.

They slap down an early edition of tomorrow's Miami Herald with the headline: **"ILLEGAL HAPPENINGS AT MIAMI JAI ALAI."**

Ronnie picks up the paper and reads.

RONNIE (V.O.)

Turns out, Ziskis was true to his word on one thing...

EXT. MIAMI HERALD BUILDING - DAY

Ziskis walks into the building.

RONNIE (V.O.)

...he walked directly from the fronton to the Miami Herald and talked a journalist's ear off for eight hours straight.

INT. MIAMI HERALD BUILDING - NEWSROOM - DAY

Ziskis spills his guts to a REPORTER.

RONNIE (V.O.)

Gave them all our names, our team
of employees at the fronton, and
everything he knew about the
system.

INT. HARTFORD JAI ALAI - TICKET WINDOW - NIGHT

Ziskis watches Rita take a brown paper bag of win
tickets from Kathy.

RONNIE (V.O.)

Special favors...

INT. HARTFORD JAI ALAI - VIP BOX - NIGHT

Ziskis watches Ronnie tip FRONTON EMPLOYEES.

RONNIE (V.O.)

Tips and payoffs...

INT. FBI OFFICES - INTERROGATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ronnie finishes reading the article...

RONNIE (V.O.)

...Everything. We were dubbed,
The Miami Syndicate.

...and looks up.

RONNIE

This guy's a hustler and a liar,
he can't prove any of this and
neither can you.

AGENT STEVENS

That may be true, but
unfortunately for you, our boss
doesn't like getting scooped by
the Miami-fucking-Herald.

AGENT PARKER

She's ready for a few of her own
headlines, and you're...

Parker picks up the paper and throws it in the trash.

AGENT PARKER (cont'd)
...as good a place to start as
any.

AGENT STEVENS
So if you wanna see your kid
before his seventh birthday,
you'll help us...

Stevens sets down a picture of Alfie Mart standing in
front of Alfie's Newsstand on Miami Beach.

AGENT STEVENS (cont'd)
...get Alfie Mart.

Ronnie looks down at the picture and back up at the
agents, blankly.

RONNIE
Never met him.

AGENT PARKER
Uncle Alfie, yeah right.

RONNIE (V.O.)
30 years. That's how long Alfie
Mart kept his nose clean and out
of trouble. A few minor arrests,
but never convicted. Now they
wanted *me* to help take him down.

Agent Parker gets in Ronnie's face.

AGENT STEVENS
When your father did a half
gainer off the Eden Roc hotel,
Alfie took care of you.

AGENT PARKER
And let's not forget about mom.

Agent Parker winks.

RONNIE
Go fuck yourself.

AGENT STEVENS
Wear a wire, get us something we
can use.

Ronnie sits back in his chair, defeated.

RONNIE (V.O.)

Were we breaking the law? No. Was there a vast gray area of unregulated shit we took full fucking advantage of? You better believe it.

Ronnie walks out of the FBI offices.

RONNIE (V.O.) (cont'd)

I knew when I left the Fed's office that day, I'd never step foot inside a fronton again.

INT. RITA'S PARENTS' HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DUSK

Ronnie walks in to find Rita sitting in the darkened living room.

RITA

How was work?

RONNIE

Good. Good day.

RITA

I thought we weren't gonna do that?

RONNIE

What?

RITA

Lie to each other. I know you got picked up.

Ronnie looks at Rita, caught.

RONNIE

They're just cage rattling. They have nothing.

RITA

They came to see me. Here. In my home. My father's home!

RONNIE

Rita, I...

RITA

...Sat right there and threatened to deport us if I didn't snitch on you and your fucking friend, Looney.

RONNIE

I'm handling it.

RITA

You know how naive you sound?

RONNIE

I just need a little more time, figure things out.

RITA

You don't have it. Not with me. I'm done.

Ronnie moves towards her.

RONNIE

Rita, please, listen.

Rita holds up her hand, stopping him.

RITA

No. You listen to me. This is not about us anymore.

Rita touches her stomach.

RONNIE

What do you want me to do?

RITA

Let's go somewhere, I don't care. Disappear.

RONNIE

They'll kill him.

RITA

That's not your problem.

Rita looks at Ronnie, finally understanding the situation.

RITA (cont'd)

We're your family now. You have to let him go. A new door's opened, I'm walking through it with or without you.

RONNIE
I can't let him die!

RITA
Well, then I don't want you here.
Leave.

Ronnie doesn't move.

RITA (cont'd)
Get out!

Ronnie turns and walks out.

INT. SHANKMAN HOME - SUNROOM - NIGHT

Rose and Ben play gin rummy with another COUPLE.

Ronnie walks into the room.

BEN
Look who it is, Mr. Miami.
Whataya want? We're in the middle
of an important hand.

Rose sees the distress on Ronnie's face.

ROSE
I'm out.

She throws her cards away.

BEN
Rose, that was a big hand.

ROSE
You'll survive. I need to talk to
my son.

Rose gets up and walks towards the kitchen. Ron follows.

INT. SHANKMAN HOME - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Rose sits at the kitchen table.

She takes a cigarette out of her top shirt pocket,
lights it, and exhales smoke.

Ronnie paces back and forth.

RONNIE
I'm in trouble.

ROSE

Sit, you're making me nervous.
We'll figure it out, we always
do.

RONNIE

Not this time. I can't find the
angle.

ROSE

There's always an angle, you just
need to make the right deal.

RONALD

What if there's no good deal?

ROSE

Then jump.

RONNIE

Huh?!

ROSE

Just go jump.

(Ronnie's shocked)

No, you're not gonna do that.
That's not an option, so think.
What do you have the other guy
wants? We all make our deals.
Your father made his...

Rose looks around the house.

ROSE (cont'd)

I made mine.

Rose stands up, turns on the sink and extinguishes the
cigarette. Putting the butt in the garbage can.

ROSE (cont'd)

You just have to decide what
you're willing to give up.

She walks out, door swinging behind her.

EXT. ALFIE'S NEWSSTAND - DAY

Ronnie stands out in front of Alfie's newsstand and
adjusts his shirt...

RONNIE (V.O.)

I had to make a move.

...and walks inside.

INT. RONNIE'S CAR - DAY

Ronnie sits in a parked car across the street from the Eden Roc Hotel wearing the suit Ben gave him. Taking in the building, he steadies himself, turns on the car and pulls into the driveway.

INT. EDEN ROC HOTEL - LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Walking into the lobby of the storied hotel, Ronnie catches his image in the mirror and adjusts his tie as he approaches the elevator.

The bell dings, and Ronnie enters as the doors shut behind him.

INT. EDEN ROC HOTEL - PRESIDENTIAL SUITE - MOMENTS LATER

Ronnie walks into the suite. One of the Goons who assaulted Rita pats him down and leads him out onto...

I/E. PRESIDENTIAL SUITE BALCONY - CONTINUOUS

...A balcony overlooking the Atlantic Ocean. HOWIE WINTER, 50's, flat face, thick head of ginger hair, wearing an open bathrobe over a swimsuit, stands at the railing peering out.

WINTER

Crazy how vast this fuckin' world
is. Hard enough for guys like me
to escape the little shit
neighborhoods we grew up in, let
alone wrap our heads around all
this.

Winter turns and examines Ronnie, who's already sweating in the thick Miami air.

WINTER (cont'd)

Wrong suit, kid.

Sitting down at a small table, Winter motions for Ronnie to join him.

WINTER (cont'd)

What's it like to grow up in a
place like this?

Ronnie sits down. A platter of Joe's Stone Crab claws sits on the table between them.

RONNIE

Only the tourists get *this* view.

WINTER

Love the tropics, but damn I don't belong here.

Winter nods towards the beach.

WINTER (cont'd)

Twenty minutes down there, I look like a fuckin' lobsta'.

Winter grabs a stone crab claw.

WINTER (cont'd)

So I wake up before the sun and go float.

Dipping the claw in mustard sauce, Winter sucks the meat off the bone in one quick motion and tosses the shell off the balcony.

WINTER (cont'd)

Then the rest of the day I sit up here in the shade and listen to that damn ocean, get a little me time.

Winter closes his eyes and listens to the waves crashing in the background. Opening his eyes, he looks at Ronnie. He's no longer friendly.

WINTER (cont'd)

Alfie got you in the room - so tell me, why am I cutting into *me* time talking to you instead of throwing you over the fucking balcony?

RONNIE

I have a proposition.

WINTER

I'm not lookin' for a new partner, I'm lookin' for the million dollars you and your friend owe me...

Winter looks at Ronnie's feet.

WINTER (cont'd)
...and I-don't-see-it.

RONNIE
That's 'cause I don't have it.

Winter motions for the Goons to toss Ronnie. Grabbing him under the arms, they drag him to the railing, and lower him over the edge by his ankles.

Ronnie speaks upside down.

RONNIE (cont'd)
I have a way you can make ten
times the money we owe! Legally!
Above board!

Winter holds up his hand for the Goons to give Ronnie a second.

They lift Ronnie back up and drop him on the balcony.

We -- TRACK BACKWARDS -- off the balcony.

RONNIE (V.O.)
So I gave the Boston mob the
entire system in exchange for
Looney's debt.

INT. EDEN ROC HOTEL - LOBBY - LATER

Ronnie strolls through the lobby, relieved.

RONNIE (V.O.)
They must've done well, because I
never heard from them again. It
could also be because the Winter
Hill Gang got into some trouble
of their own.

QUICK FLASHES of NEWS FOOTAGE and NEWSPAPER HEADLINES:

"HOWARD WINTER INDICTED ON "HORSE RACE FIXING CHARGES"

FLASH: Images of GANGSTERS shooting at and killing each other in the streets.

"JAMES "WHITEY" BULGER BECOMES NEW HEAD OF THE WINTER HILL GANG."

FLASH: Images of Whitey Bulger on the FBI's most wanted list.

"JAMES "WHITEY" BULGER AND STEPHEN "THE RIFLEMAN" FLEMMI IMPLICATED IN MURDER OF WORLD JAI ALAI PRESIDENT ROGER WHEELER."

FLASH: Crime scenes layer across the screen. BANG. BANG. BANG.

EXT. EDEN ROC HOTEL - VALET STAND - MOMENTS LATER

Ronnie takes one last look up at the 10th floor balcony, gets in his car and drives off.

INT. DEUCE BAR - NIGHT

Looney sits at the bar nursing a beer. Ronnie walks in and sits next to him.

RONNIE

It's done. I gave Winter Hill the system.

LOONEY

You crazy?! This is just a bump in the road, we could've made it all back and then some.

RONNIE

We're done.

Looney takes a long sip of his drink, thinking.

LOONEY

When I heard you were back and saw that trifecta bet, I thought this could be a way for you and I to run the bases again.

RONNIE

We're not in little league anymore. I'm gonna have my own family. I have to take care of them.

Ronnie looks at him, making a decision.

RONNIE (cont'd)

My father was proud of you. Sometimes I think he loved you more than me.

LOONEY

That's not true and you know it.
He saw himself in you and that
scared him to death.

RONNIE

I wish I could have one more day
with him. Even just an hour, so I
could ask him why he did it.

LOONEY

Does it matter?

RONNIE

It does to me.
(Ronnie tears up)
Why were we never enough?

LOONEY

You'd only be asking him what he
asked himself every day. Drunks
don't know why they're drunks...
they drink. No one wants to fuck
up their lives, we just do.

Ronnie, realizes that they're not talking about Harry
anymore.

LOONEY (cont'd)

You're not like him. You're gonna
be a good dad. Thanks for having
my back, Ronnie.

Looney smiles at Ronnie, stands and walks out.

RONNIE (V.O.)

Looney went straight to the Feds
and turned himself in.

INT. FBI OFFICES - INTERROGATION ROOM - LATER

Looney sits at a desk downloading to the Feds.

RONNIE (V.O.)

In exchange for leaving Rita's
family alone, he told the Feds
everything they wanted to know
about Ziskis and their plans to
get players to take a dive.
Cleared my name and his
conscience. Got six months plus
probation.

INT. RONNIE'S CAR - DAY

Ronnie drives north on AIA.

RONNIE (V.O.)

Within a few years, frontons started posting the win, place, show results in all the programs. Small system bettors started popping up, betting down the numbers and the payouts got smaller.

INT. PAPA RICO'S - GUESTROOM - DAY

Papa Rico's empty guest room.

RONNIE (V.O.)

The Internet made Papa Rico's treasure trove of information public and available for the entire world to analyze.

INT. RONNIE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Ronnie loosens his tie as he pulls onto A1A.

RONNIE (V.O.)

The perfect storm of events that made Looney and me a fortune were gone forever.

INT. FEDERAL BUILDING - HARTFORD - DAY

FEDERAL AGENTS in suits interview Ziskis.

RONNIE (V.O.)

After Ziskis' article, Janet Reno didn't waste any time. He was indicted...

INT. MIAMI JAI ALAI - DAY

FEDERAL AGENTS enter the fronton in FBI jackets and suits.

RONNIE (V.O.)

...along with owners, bettors, and players up and down the eastern seaboard...

John and Kathy raise their hands in the air. The Agents shut the betting windows.

INT. JANET RENO'S OFFICE - DAY

Janet Reno sits at her large desk, smiles and nods her head at Agents Parker and Stevens, who smile back.

RONNIE (V.O.)
...ostensibly killing the sport
forever.

INT. MIAMI JAI ALAI - PLAYERS LOUNGE - DAY

Agents Parker and Stevens enter the lounge with search warrants and additional AGENTS.

The PLAYERS look around, confused.

INT. MIAMI JAI ALAI - AUDITORIUM - PRESENT DAY

The auditorium has less than a dozen spectators, mostly ALCOHOLICS day drinking or degenerate GAMBLERS.

The PLAYERS half-hardheartedly go through the motions.

RONNIE (V.O.)
Jai alai's still around, but it's
a shell of what it once was.
Game fixing and ties to organized
crime spooked the crowds...

NEWS FOOTAGE: PLAYERS picket Miami Jai Alai.

RONNIE (V.O.) (cont'd)
...and a 1988 players strike that
lasted 3 years put a final nail
in the coffin.

INT. FLORIDA CAPITOL BUILDING - DAY

Local politicians sit in conference.

RONNIE (V.O.)
In 2003 the Florida legislature
tried to save the frontons by
passing the HB 1059 bill...

INT. MIAMI JAI ALAI - DAY

TIME LAPSE -- of a room being constructed and filled with poker tables and slot machines.

RONNIE (V.O.)
 ...which allowed real-money poker
 in parimutuel betting facilities.

A smoke filled poker room littered with poker PLAYERS.

RONNIE (V.O.) (cont'd)
 Now the owners take their rake
 off poker players...

PATRONS pump quarters into rows upon rows of slot machines rolling and dinging.

RONNIE (V.O.) (cont'd)
 ...and slot machines. The
 government still gets their
 taxes. Everybody's happy.

INT. MIAMI JAI ALAI - AUDITORIUM - FLASHBACK - DAY

Ronnie, 12 and Harry, 42, eat hot dogs, watching a match in progress, all smiles.

RONNIE (V.O.)
 My father loved the beauty and
 grace of the sport. My biggest
 regret? Having a hand in its
 demise.

INT. STUDIO APARTMENT - DAY**SUPER: SOMEWHERE IN FLORIDA**

Ziskis sits alone at a foldout table with a phone and a overflowing ashtray.

RONNIE (V.O.)
 In 1998 Harvey Ziskis was
 sentenced to eight years in
 prison for money laundering...

Pictures of greyhounds litter his desk.

RONNIE (V.O.)
...and selling shares of dead
greyhounds to out of state
retirees. The creep even scammed
his own uncle.

INT. COHEN, STEVENS, & BRIER LAW FIRM - DAY

Ronnie walks out of Bob's office.

RONNIE (V.O.)
As for the Feds, with the right
legal advice and the deal Looney
made, the DA didn't have enough
to build a case against me. If
they wanted Alfie, they'd have to
find their own way.

EXT. LINCOLN RD. MALL - PAYPHONE - DAY

Alfie stands at the payphone talking business.

A BEAT COP walks up behind him, and overhears part of
his conversation.

RONNIE (V.O.)
And if it wasn't for a Miami
Beach flatfoot who overheard him
at a payphone talking odds and
point spreads they probably never
would've. Arrested him on
probable cause. Can you believe
that? Dumb-fuckin'-luck. Spent
the rest of his life in prison.

EXT. ALFIE'S NEWSSTAND - DAY

Alfie's led away in handcuffs.

RONNIE (V.O.)
Ultimately, Alfie was right. Only
a certain type can live *that*
life.

EXT. AIA - DAY

Ronnie and Rita drive north up A1A with a baby in toe.

RONNIE (V.O.)

After the baby was born, Rita and I packed up and headed west. We had a enough cash to keep us happy for a few years.

(looks to camera)

What, you thought I walked away with nothing?

INT. RITA HOUSE - LITTLE HAVANA - FLASHBACK - DAY

Ronnie hands two suitcases of cash to Rita's father, who secures them in a back closet.

EXT. HARTFORD CORRECTIONAL CENTER - DAY

Looney gets out of prison and a limo is waiting for him.

RONNIE (V.O.)

Because Looney broke the law in Hartford, he served his time in Connecticut.

Looney slides in and there's a bag on the back seat. He opens the bag and it's filled with cash.

RONNIE (V.O.) (cont'd)

I made sure to set aside his share.

INT. ILLEGAL POKER ROOM - DAY

Looney, a sadness in his eyes, sits at a table with DEGENERATE GAMBLERS.

RONNIE (V.O.)

We never spoke again after that day in the bar.

Looney wins a hand and rakes in the chips, smiling.

RONNIE (V.O.) (cont'd)

I heard he stayed clean after prison for a minute, but you know how that goes.

Looney's image fades away and slowly disappears.

